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CRITICAL REFLECTIONS

O N

P O E T R Y,  
PAINTING and MUSIC.

With  
An Inquiry into the Rise and Progress of the  
*Theatrical Entertainments* of the Ancients.

Written in FRENCH  
By the Abbé Du Bos, Member and perpetual  
Secretary of the FRENCH ACADEMY.

Translated into ENGLISH by  
THOMAS NUGENT, Gent.  
*From the fifth Edition revised, corrected, and  
enlarged by the Author.*

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*Ut pictura poesis erit.* —

HOR. de arte poet.

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V O L. III.

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PART III.

Which contains a dissertation on the theatrical representations of the ancients.

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C R I T I -





CRITICAL REFLECTIONS  
ON  
POETRY *and* PAINTING.

PART III.

*Which contains a dissertation on the theatrical representations of the ancients.*

INTRODUCTION.



THE ancient music was a science of much greater extent than the modern. The latter teaches only two things, the composition of musical songs, and the execution of these songs, either with the voice, or instruments. But the science of music had a more extensive object among the Greeks and Romans.

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mans. It contained not only the same precepts as ours, but moreover it included several subjects which ours does not, either because part of them are at present neglected, or because the art which instructs us in the rest, is not supposed to constitute a part of music, insomuch that the person who professes it, bears no longer the name of a musician. Among the ancients, poetry was one of the arts subordinate to music, and consequently the latter contained precepts relating to the construction of all sorts of verses. The art of *Saltation* or gesture was likewise one of the musical arts. Hence those who taught the steps and attitudes of our dance, or of dancing properly so called, which formed a part of the art of gesticulation, had the appellation of musicians. In fine, the ancient music taught to compose as well as write the simple declamation in notes, a thing disused in our days. Aristides Quintilianus has left us an excellent book on music, written in the Greek tongue; and this author lived under the reign of Domitian, or Trajan, pursuant to the judicious conjecture of M. Meibomius, who published this work with a Latin version. According to Aristides, most of the preceding authors defined music: *An art, which teaches a decency or grace in the voice, as well as in the motions of the body* <sup>a</sup>.

As writers have not in general this idea of the Greek and Roman music, but suppose it to have

<sup>a</sup> Τέχνη ὡς ἐκείνητος ἐν φωναῖς καὶ κινήσει. ARIST. QUINT.  
lib. I.

been

been confined within the same limits as ours, they are therefore very often at a loss, upon attempting to explain what the ancients mention concerning their music, and the use it was applied to in their times. Hence it is, that the passages of Aristotle's poetics, as well as those of Cicero, Quintilian, and the best writers of antiquity, where mention is made of their music, have been misunderstood by commentators, who imagining that these passages related to our dance and song, that is, to dance and song properly so called, have not been able to dive into their true meaning. The explication they give, renders them still more obscure, and is rather an obstruction to our conceiving justly the manner in which the ancient dramatic pieces were acted.

I shall venture to undertake the explication of these passages, and especially of such as treat of the theatrical representations. In the execution of this attempt, the plan I propose is as follows.

In the first place, I shall give a general idea of speculative music and the musical arts, that is, of such as by the ancients were rendered subordinate to this science. If I mention little or nothing concerning that branch, which teaches the principles of concords and all sorts of harmony, 'tis because it would not become me to make any change or additions to the explications, that Meibomius, M. Broffard, M. Burette, and other modern authors have given us of the harmonic writings of the ancients.

Secondly, I shall shew that the ancients composed and wrote in notes their theatrical declamation, infomuch that those who recited, were assisted by others that accompanied them with their action.

Thirdly, I shall prove that they had reduced the art of gesture or the *saltation* (one of the arts subordinate to the science of music) into so regular a method, that in the execution of several scenes they divided the theatrical declamation between two actors, one of whom recited, while the other accompanied him with gesticulations suited to the sense of the verses; and that there were even companies of pantomimes or dumb comedians, who acted intire plays without speaking.

I shall conclude my work with some observations on the advantages and inconveniences resulting from the practice of the ancients.

## C H A P. I.

*General idea of the ancient music, and of the arts subordinate to this science.*

THE treatise on music, written in Greek by Aristides Quintilianus, and translated into Latin by Meibomius, may be justly considered as the most instructive work that antiquity has left us on this science. 'Tis, in my opinion, the most methodical piece of this kind, and as the author was a Greek by birth, and had a constant opportunity



tunity of frequenting Roman company (having lived at a time when the country inhabited by the Greeks was subject to the successors of Augustus) he must consequently have been acquainted with the Greek and Roman practice of music. From his book therefore we shall take the general idea of the music of the ancients. Besides, the Roman music was the same as that of the Greeks from whom they borrowed this science. It had the same extent and principles in both nations, so that we may indifferently make use of Greek or Latin writers, in order to explain the extent and practice of this art among the ancients. Aristides Quintilianus defines music, <sup>a</sup> *an art* (but an art which demonstrates the principles on which it proceeds) *which teacheth whatever regards the use of the voice, as well as the graceful movements of the body.* He produces other definitions of music somewhat different from his own, all of which suppose alike that this science had the extent we give it.

The Latin writers affirm the same thing. *Music*, says Quintilian the orator <sup>b</sup>, *gives instructions for regulating not only the several inflections of the voice, but likewise all the movements of the body. These inflections and movements are to be managed according to a certain and judicious method.* The

<sup>a</sup> Μουσική ἐστὶν ἐπιστήμη μέλος, καὶ τῶν περὶ μέλος συμβαινόντων . . . . . γνώσις τῶν περὶ τοῦ σώματος ἐν σώμασι καὶ κινήσεισι.  
ARISTID. QUINT. l. i.

<sup>b</sup> Numeros musice duplexes. habet in vocibus & in corpore, utriusque enim rei aptus quidam motus desideratur. QUINTIL. Inst. l. i. c. 10.

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same author adds some lines lower: <sup>a</sup> *A decent and proper motion of the body is likewise necessary, which can be learnt from no other art but music.*

St Austin, in a work he composed on this art, says the same thing as Quintilian. He affirms <sup>b</sup>, *That music delivers instructions relating to the countenance and gesture, and in short, concerning all those motions of the body whose theory is reducible to science, and their practice to method.* The ancient music subjected all the motions of the body to a regular measure in the same manner as the motions of our dancers.

The science of music, or if you will, the speculative music, was called *Harmonica*, because it delivered the principles of harmony, and the general rules of concords. This it was that taught what we call *composition*. As the songs which were the work of composition, had sometimes among the ancients, as with us, the absolute denomination of music, they divided music, taken in the sense here explained, into three genera, or kinds, to wit, the *Diatonic*, the *Chromatic*, and the *Enharmonic*. The difference between these three kinds was, that one admitted some sounds which the other rejected. In the *Diatonic* the modulation could not make its progressions by intervals less than major semi-tones. The

<sup>a</sup> *Corporis quoque decens & aptus motus qui dicitur Eurithmia, est necessarius, nec aliunde peti potest.* Id. *ibid.*

<sup>b</sup> *Quicquid numerositatis quæ temporum atque intervallorum dimensionibus movetur . . . . . Musica est scientia bene movendi.* S. AUG. de Mus. l. i.

modulation of the Chromatic made use of the minor semi-tones; but in the <sup>a</sup> Enharmonic the progression might be made by quarters of tones. The ancients divided their compositions also into several *genera*, with respect to their mode or tone, and they called these modes after the name of the country where they were principally used. Thus one was called the Phrygian mode; another the Doric, and so of the rest. But I shall refer the reader to the moderns, who have treated thoroughly of the ancient *harmonica*; in order to come sooner to what I have to observe concerning the musical arts, which are the principal object of this dissertation.

As music embraced so extensive a subject, it was natural it should include several arts, each of which should have its particular object. Thus we see that Aristides Quintilianus reckons six subordinate arts to music. Of these, three taught all sorts of composition, and three all kinds of execution <sup>b</sup>.

Wherefore music, with respect to composition, was divided into the art of composing the *Melopaia*, or the songs; the *Rhythmica*; and the *Poetica*, or art of poetry. With regard to the execution it was divided into the *Organical*, or the art of playing upon instruments, the *Odical*, or the

<sup>a</sup> BROSSARD'S Musical Dictionary.

<sup>b</sup> Τὸ δὲ πραγματικόν, εἰς τε τὸ χρηστικὸν τῶν προειρημένων τέμνεται, καὶ τῶν ἱερατικῶν καὶ τῶν μὲν χρηστικῶν μέρη, μελοποιία, ῥυθμοποιία, ποιήσις· τὰ δὲ ἱερατικὰ, ὀργανικόν, ὠδικόν, ὑποκριτικόν.  
ARIST. QUINT. l. i.

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art of singing, and the *Hypocritical*, or the art of gesticulation.

The *Melopaia*, or art of composing melody, taught the manner of composing and writing in notes all sorts of songs; that is, not only musical songs, or such as are properly so called, but likewise all kinds of recitation or declamation.

The *Rhythmica* prescribed rules for subjecting the movements of the body and the voice to a certain measure, so as to beat time with a motion suitable to the subject.

The *Poeitica* taught the mechanic part of poetry; that is, how to compose regularly all kinds of verses.

We have just now observed that music, with regard to the execution, was divided into three arts; the art of playing upon instruments, called *Organical*; the art of singing, or the *Odical*; and the art of gesticulation, called *Hypocritical*.

'Tis easy to conjecture what were the lessons of the *Organical* music, and of that which was called the *Odical*, or the art of singing. With respect to the *Hypocritical*, which was so denominated by reason of its belonging properly to comedians; who by the Greeks were called *ὑποκριταὶ* or *counterfeiters*, it taught the art of gesture; and shewed by rules established on certain principles the manner of executing what we perform in our days merely by the direction of instinct, or at the most by a kind of rote-knowledge supported by some few observations. The Greeks called this musical art *Ὀρχησις*, and the Romans *Saltatio*.



Porphyrus, who lived about two hundred years after Aristides Quintilianus, and has left us a commentary on Ptolemy's *Harmonics*, divides the musical arts into five only, to wit, \* the *Metrica*, the *Rhythmica*, the *Organica*, the *Poetica*, or art of poetry in its full extent, and the *Hypocritica*. We find by comparing Aristides's division to that of Porphyrus, that the latter reckons two arts less than Aristides. These are the art of composing the *Melopœia*, and the art of Singing. If notwithstanding this omission, Porphyrus still reckons five musical arts, whereas he should not reckon more than four, 'tis because he ranks the *Metrica* among these arts, tho' it is not mentioned by Aristides. But this difference in the enumeration does not hinder our authors from saying in the main the same thing. Let us endeavour to explain this difficulty.

Since Ptolemy most carefully observes that he takes the *Poetica* or poetic art in its greatest extent, he ought not to have spoken of the *Melopœia*; or the art of composing the *Melopœia* as of a particular art, because it is contained in the *Poetica* considered in its full extent. In effect, the art of composing the *Melopœia*, pursuant to the Greek custom, formed a part of the art of poetry. We shall see presently that the Greek poets themselves composed the *Melopœia* of their pieces. If Aristides on the contrary makes two distinct arts of the *Poetica* and the art of composing the *Melopœia*, 'tis because he had a regard to the custom of

23W the Hypomnemata in Harm. PTOLE. p. 191. D 377

the Romans, which was, that the dramatic poets did not compose the declamation of their verses themselves, but had it done to their hands by artists who were composers by profession, and whom Quintilian calls, *Artifices pronuntiandi*. This is what we shall hereafter explain more at large.

For the same reason Porphyry has not followed Aristides, in making a particular art of that of Singing. Those who taught in Greece the *Poetica* in its full extent, instructed people likewise, in all probability, in the art of executing all sorts of songs or declamations.

When Porphyry on the other hand makes two distinct arts of the *Rhythmica*, of which Aristides makes but one; that is, when he divides what Aristides makes a single art called the *Rhythmopæia*, into the *Métrica* and the *Rhythmica* properly so called; this very likely arises from the following cause. The progress made by the pantomimes in their art, which had its first rise under Augustus, during the two centuries that elapsed from the time of Aristides to that of Porphyry, induced those who belonged to the stage to subdivide the *Rhythmica*, and consequently to make two different arts of it. One of these, which was the *Métrica* or the *measurer* pointed out the method of reducing under a certain regular measure all sorts of gestures in all kinds of sounds, that could be made to follow measure; and the *Rhythmica* taught only how to beat this measure, and especially to beat it with a proper motion. We shall see hereafter that the *movement* was,  
in

in the opinion of the ancients, the most important part relating to the execution of music; and the invention of the pantomimic art must have obliged them to make a profound study of whatever might perfect the art of movement. Certain it is, as we shall see hereafter, that from the reign of Augustus to the total subversion of the western empire, the representations of the pantomimes were the most pleasing entertainments that could be exhibited to the Roman people.

I conclude therefore that the difference between the enumeration of the musical arts made by Aristides Quintilianus, and that by Porphyry, is only a seeming difference, and that these two authors do not contradict one another in the main.

Let us make one observation here by way of digression. Since the ancient music gave methodical lessons on so many things, and since it contained precepts that were useful to grammarians, as well as necessary to poets and all those who were obliged to speak in public, one ought not to be surprized that the Greeks and Romans <sup>a</sup> thought it a necessary art, and bestowed so many encomiums upon it that are unapplicable to our music. We ought not to wonder that Aristides Quintilianus <sup>b</sup> says, “ That music was an art  
“ necessary

<sup>a</sup> QUINT. Inst. lib. I. cap. 12.

<sup>b</sup> Οὐ γὰρ ὥσπερ αἱ λοιπαὶ περὶ μίαν ὕλην πραγμάτων, ἢ περὶ χρόνῳ διάστημα, μικρὸν χρησιμεύουσα θεωρεῖται· ἀλλὰ πᾶσα μὲν ἡλικία, καὶ σύμπας βίος, ἅπασα δὲ πρᾶξις μουσικῇ μόνῃ τελείως ἀν καλακοσμηθεῖν . . . . . παῖσι τε πρόσφορος τοῖς ἐκ μελωδίας ἀγαθοῖς, καὶ προβαίνεισι τὰ τε τῆς ἡμετέρας λέξεως, καὶ ἀπλῶς λόγῳ



“ necessary for all ages in life, as it taught what  
 “ was requisite for children as well as adult  
 “ people.”

Quintilian says for the same reason <sup>a</sup>, that a person must not only know music to be an orator, but that he cannot be even a good grammarian without it, because grammar cannot be properly taught without shewing the use of metre and rhythmus. This judicious writer observes also in another place <sup>b</sup>, that in former times the professions of teaching music and grammar were both united, and practised by the same master.

In fine, Quintilian in a chapter where he attempts to prove that an orator should learn at least something of music, says, <sup>c</sup>: *It will not be disputed with me, that those who intend to be orators, ought to read and understand the poets. Now does not music preside over the composition of all sorts of poems? If any one should be so unreasonable as to say, that the rules which, generally speaking, a poet observes in composing his verses, do not be-*

λόγῳ σύμπαντος παραδιδῶσα κάλλη· προῖῃσι δὲ τὴν τε τῶν ἀριθμῶν ἐξηγεμένη φύσιν, καὶ ἀναλογίαν ποικιλίαν· ἀρμονίας δὲ τὰς διὰ τέ-  
 των ἐν πᾶσι σώμασιν ὑποφαίνεσα. ARISTID. QUINT. lib. 1.

<sup>a</sup> Nec citra musicen grammatica potest esse perfecta, cum ei de rhythmis metrisque dicendum sit. QUINT. Inst. 1. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Id. ibid.

<sup>c</sup> Poetas certè legendos futuro oratori concefferint. Num hi sine musica? At si quis tam cæcus animi est ut de aliis dubitet, illos certè qui carmina ad lyram composuerunt. Hæc diutius . . . . . Id. ibid.

long to music, he cannot however deny that those which he must follow in the composition of verses designed to be accompanied in the recitation, belong to this art. This passage will appear much clearer, after reading what I have to observe concerning the *carmen* or the noted declamation of verses intended for an accompany'd recitation.

In short, all the writings of the ancients demonstrate, that music was esteemed in their times a necessary art for polite people, and that those who had no knowledge of it, were looked upon as persons of no education, like illiterate men in our days who can neither write nor read.

But to return to the musical arts; 'tis a great misfortune we have none of those methods left, which were invented for teaching the practice of those arts, of which there were so many professors in Greece and Italy. Besides, ancient authors who wrote on music, and whose works are yet extant, have said very little concerning the mechanic parts of the subordinate arts, which they considered as easy and common practices, the explication of which was fit only for exercising the talents of a school master. For example, St Austin, who has composed a work on music divided into six books, says<sup>a</sup>, "That he will  
 " not treat of these practices, because they are  
 " things that are commonly known by the most  
 " indifferent stage-players."

<sup>a</sup> *Non enim tale aliquid hic dicendum est, quale quilibet cantores histrionesque noverunt.* AUGUSTIN, de Musica. lib. 1.

Wherefore

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Wherefore the authors abovementioned have written rather as philosophers, who reason and speculate on the general principles of an art, the practice of which is known by their cotemporaries, than as persons who intend their book should without any other assistance instruct us in the art they treat of.

Nevertheless I hope, that with the help of such facts as are related by those ancient writers who have occasionally spoken of the musical arts, I shall be able to give, if not a compleat, at least a clear and distinct notion of them, and to explain in what manner the dramatic pieces of the ancients were represented.

We have observed that Aristides Quintilianus reckoned six musical arts, to wit, the *Rhythmica*, the *Melopœia*, the *Poetica*, the *Organica*, the *Odica*, and the *Hypocritica*; but we shall reduce these six to four, reckoning the *Poetica*, the *Melopœia*, and the *Odica*, for one and the same art. We have already seen that the *Poetica*, the *Melopœia* and the *Odica* had such an affinity, that Porphyry makes them-but one art, which he calls the *Poetica* taken in its full extent.



## C H A P. II.

*Of the rhythmical music.*

WE have mentioned already that the *Rhythmica* prescribed rules for reducing all the motions of the body and voice to a certain measure, so as to beat time. *The rhythmica*, says Aristides <sup>a</sup>, *regulates the gesture as well as the recitation*; it must therefore have taught the great use that may be made of measure and movement. By what we are going to say concerning this subject, it will evidently appear that the ancients set a great value upon this art. St Austin says <sup>b</sup> in a passage of his retractations, where he speaks of his book on music, that his principal view in writing it was to shew the surprizing advantage that may arise from measure and movement.

The Greeks acknowledged as well as we four things in music, the progression of the tones of the principal subject, or the singing; the harmony or the agreement of the different parts; the measure; and the movement. The two last were therefore taught by the *Rhythmica*, which Porphyry, as we have already observed, divided into the *Metrica* or the measurer, and the *Rhythmica* or the art of movement.

<sup>a</sup> Ρυθμίξειναι δὲ ἐν μουσικῇ κίνησις σώματος, μελωδία, λέξις.  
ARISTID. QUINT. 1. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Et de musica sex volumina quantum attinet ad eam partem quæ rhythmus vocatur. AUGUSTIN. Retract. 1. 1.



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Plato, to signify that the movement is the soul of a measured song, says, <sup>a</sup> that *the rhythmus is the soul of metre*. Metre, says Aristotle <sup>b</sup>, is only a part of the *rhythmus*. We read in Quintilian <sup>c</sup>, if I understand him right, that one measure must not borrow of another; but that he who beats the measure, is at liberty to accelerate or slacken its movement. Aristides Quintilianus observes <sup>d</sup>, that according to the opinion of several, the metre differed from the *rhythmus*, as the whole from its part. But as we sometimes say absolutely the movement to express the measure and movement, so the Greeks sometimes made use of the word *rhythmus* to express the *rhythmus* and *metre*. 'Tis taking the word *rhythmus* in this signification that Aristotle says in his poetics, that music makes its imitations with singing, harmony, and rhythmus, as painting imitates with strokes and colors.

The Romans who frequently made use of Greek terms, when speaking of music, doubtless understood the etymology of them, and what changes could have been made by custom in their proper signification. Now St Austin says <sup>e</sup> positively, that it was usual

<sup>a</sup> PLATO de leg. l. 2.

<sup>b</sup> Poet. cap. 4.

<sup>c</sup> *Rhythmis libera spatia, metris finita sunt.* QUINT. Inst. l. 9. c. 4.

<sup>d</sup> Ἐκ δὴ τῶν ποδῶν συνίσταται τὰ μέτρα . . . . . διαφέρειν δὲ τῶ ῥυθμῷ φασιν, οἱ μὲν ὡς μέρος ἔχει. ARIST. QUINT. lib. I.

<sup>e</sup> *Rhythmī enim nomen in musicā usque adeo patet ut hęc tota pars ejus quę ad diu ē non diu pertinet, rhythmus nominata sit.* AUG. de Mus. l. 2.



in his time, to give the name of *rhythmus* to whatsoever regulated the duration in the execution of compositions.

Nothing is commoner in all languages, than the name of the species given to the genus, and that of the genus attributed to the species. Without departing from our subject, we shall see presently that the Romans gave the word *modulatio* a more extensive sense than it originally imported. They called the singing *soni* or *voces*; the harmony *concentus*; and the measure, *numeri*. When Virgil in one of his eclogues makes Lycidas say to Mæris: “ Repeat those verses I heard you sing one evening; I should soon recollect the numbers, could I but remember the words.”

*Quid, quæ te purâ solum sub nocte canentem  
Audieram, numeros memini, si verba tenerem.*

VIRG. Eclog. 9.

All he intends that Lycidas should say, is, that altho' he had forgot the words of these verses, yet he remembered the feet and measure of which they were composed, and consequently their cadence. Wherefore *Modi*, a word which the Latins use frequently, when speaking of their music, properly signified no more than the movement. And yet they frequently expressed the measure and movement by the single word *Modi*, and sometimes they gave the name of *modulation* to the whole composition, without any regard to the etymology of the word.

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Let us shew therefore in the first place that *modulatio* properly signified only the measure and movement, that which is called *rhythmus* by Porphyry; and secondly let us prove, that the Romans gave nevertheless the name of modulation to the whole musical composition. We shall frequently have occasion to suppose that the ancients indulged themselves in this kind of inaccuracy.

Quintilian relates that Aristoxenus, who according to Suidas was one of Aristotle's disciples, and wrote a book on music which is to be found in Meibomius's collection, divided vocal music into Rhythmus and Singing. "The *Rhythmus*,  
" continues Quintilian, <sup>a</sup> is what we call *modulation*; and the measured or noted singing is  
" what we distinguish by the name of the tone  
" and sounds."

Quintilian, to signify that he does not insist upon his orator's having a thorough knowledge of music, says, <sup>b</sup> that he does not require he should be such a master of the modulation, as to beat the measure of the *cantica* or monologues. These, as we shall shew hereafter, were theatrical scenes, whose declamation was

<sup>a</sup> *Vocis rationem Aristoxenus musicus dividit in ῥυθμὸν ἔμμετρον καὶ ἀμέτρον, quorum alterum modulatione, alterum canore ac sonis constat.* QUINT. Inst. l. i. c. 10.

<sup>b</sup> *Nam nec ego consumi studentem his artibus volo, nec moduletur ut musicis modis cantica excipiat.* QUINT. Inst. l. i. c. 13.

more musical, that is, somewhat more a-kin to singing.

And yet (which is what we have to observe in the second place) Quintilian frequently calls the whole composition a *modulation*, comprizing under this name, the singing, the harmony, the measure, and the movement. For example, this author in the third chapter of the eleventh book of his Institutes, where he gives such curious lessons concerning the care an orator ought to have of his voice, as well as concerning the recitation, says with regard to several bad ways of pronouncing : *There is nothing more intolerable in pronunciation than to hear a theatrical modulation either in private declamation or at the bar. This is, I acknowledge, a fashionable vice, but nevertheless it disgraces an orator.* 'Tis manifest that Quintilian comprises the singing or composed declamation, in the *modulation* abovementioned ; for 'tis the whole composition which he calls *modulation*.

In the inscriptions prefixt to Terence's comedies, 'tis said that Flaccus made the modes, or *modulated* them, to signify that Flaccus composed the declamation. *Modos fecit, modulavit Flaccus.*

St Austin<sup>b</sup> accounts in some measure for this custom, by saying, that whatsoever a musician has

<sup>a</sup> *Sed quodcumque ex his vitium magis tulerim, quam quonunc maxime laboratur, in causis omnibus scholisque cantandi : quod inutilius sit an fœdus, nescio. Quid enim oratori minus convenit quam modulatio scenica?* QUINT. Inst. lib. II. c. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Modulatio, quo uno pœne verbo tantæ disciplinæ definitio continetur.* AUG. de Mus. l. 1.

to do, is almost all comprised in the word *modulation*.

I might quote several other passages of ancient Latin authors, who have made use of the words *modi* and *modulatio* in this extensive signification; but to convince the reader that it was commonly employed to express the intire composition; it will be sufficient to produce the definition of the word *modulation*, given by Diomedes the grammarian before the subversion of the Roman empire. *Modulation*, says this author <sup>a</sup>, is the art of rendering the pronunciation of a continued recitation more agreable, and the sound more pleasing to the ear.

In fine, the term *modulatio* among the Romans had the same signification as that of *Carmen*; a word we cannot translate according to its strict signification, which imported the measure and noted pronunciation of verse, because as we have not the thing itself, we want a proper term to express it. But we shall presently treat of this *Carmen*; let us return now to the *Rhythmica*, or the modulation properly so called.

'Tis not a difficult matter to understand how the ancients measured their vocal music, or that which was composed on words. We have already observed, when speaking of the mechanic part of poetry, that the syllables had a determined quantity in the Greek and Latin

<sup>a</sup> *Modulatio est continuati sermonis in jucundiores dicendi rationem artificialis flexus, in delectabilem auditui formam conversus.* DIOMED. de Arte Gramm. l. 2. c. 4.



tongues. This quantity was even relative, that is, two short syllables ought not to be longer in pronouncing; than a long one; and a long syllable ought to be as long in pronouncing as two short ones. The short syllable was equal to one duration or time in measure, and the long syllable was equivalent to two. *The very children, says Quintilian<sup>a</sup>, know that a long syllable has two durations, and a short syllable but one.*

This proportion between long and short syllables was as fixt as that which is between notes of different value. As two crotchets in our music ought to have the same duration as a minim, so in the ancient music two short syllables had just the same time as a long one. Wherefore when the Greek or Roman musicians set any piece whatsoever to music, all they had to do in order to measure it, was to conform to the quantity of the syllable on which every note was placed; so that the value of the note was already decided by that of the syllable. Hence Boetius<sup>b</sup>, who lived under the reign of Theodoric king of the Ostrogoths, when the theatres were still open at Rome, says, when speaking of a composer who sets verses to music: *That these verses have already their measure by virtue of their figure*; that is in consequence of the combination of the long and short syllables of which they are composed.

<sup>a</sup> *Longam esse duorum temporum, brevem unius, etiam pueri sciunt.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 9. c. 4.

<sup>b</sup> *Ut si quando melos aliquid musicus voluisset ascribere supra versum rhythmica metri compositione dissentum;* &c. BOET. de Mus. l. 4.

On the other hand we have observed, when speaking of the mechanic part of Greek and Latin verses, that every one knew from their very infancy the quantity of each syllable. They understood therefore, without entering into a particular study for that purpose, the value of each syllable, and which is the same thing, of each note.

Here it may be inquired, what number of durations the Greeks and Romans used in the measures of their musical pieces, composed on words either in prose or verse? I answer, that with respect to musical compositions in verse, the measure of these compositions, and the number of durations of each measure was already regulated by the figure of the verse. Every foot constituted a measure: in fact, we shall meet hereafter with the word *pes*, which signifies a foot, used by Quintilian and others to express a measure. There is nevertheless one objection against this explication; which is, that the measures of the same piece of music would be consequently unequal in their duration, because the feet of the same verse were not equal. Some had only three durations, while others had four. In fact, the feet composed of a long and a short syllable, or of three short ones, contained only three durations; whereas those that were composed of long syllables, or of one long and two short, had four durations. I grant it could not be otherwise; but this did not hinder the person, who beat the measure, from marking it exactly.

With regard to musical compositions in prose, 'tis plain that it was also the quantity of the syllable which decided the value of a note placed on that syllable. Perhaps the ancients did not measure musical pieces of that kind, but left the person who beat the measure by following the principles of the *Rhythmica*, left him, I say, at liberty to mark the cadence after such a number of durations as he should think proper to join, as it were, under the same measure. How long ago is it since we ourselves began to write the measure of our music? 'Tis for this very reason the ancients ranked poetry among the musical arts. Hence also most Greek and Latin authors who have wrote upon music, treat very copiously of the quantity of the syllables, feet, and figure of verse, as well as of the use that may be made of them in strengthening and imbellishing the discourse. Those who are desirous of knowing how far the ancients have canvassed this subject, may read what St Austin has wrote concerning it in his book on music.

Besides, we learn from Aristides Quintilianus, as well as from what other authors have said on this article, that the ancients had a *rhythmus* in which every foot of a verse did not always make a measure, because some measures were composed of eight syllabic durations; that is, of eight short ones or their value. This was a way of remedying the inconveniency which arose from the inequality of time in the feet of the same verse. But as this is a point which belongs to music properly

perly so called; I shall refer my reader to what has been said concerning it by a learned gentleman<sup>a</sup>, who has joined a very extensive erudition to a thorough knowledge of this science.

But how is it the ancients marked the value of the notes of their organical or instrumental music, since these notes could not draw their value from the quantity of the syllables on which they were placed? This I can't tell; however, I conceive in what manner a certain value might be fixt in the instrumental music to every *femeion* or organic note, by points placed either above, or below, or on the side: or else by putting on the top of each note one of the two characters which denoted whether a syllable was short or long, characters that every body had learnt at school. We shall treat at large of these *femeia*, when we come to explain how the ancients noted their musical song, or their song properly so called; and that which was only a simple declamation. There is another thing which is still more worthy of our curiosity, that is, the manner how the metrical music marked the durations in all the different gestures of the body. How could the ancients (some will say) write their gestures with notes? How could they contrive to mark each motion of the feet and hands, each attitude and step by a particular figure which should point out distinctly each of those motions? I shall be satisfied here with answering that the art

<sup>a</sup> M. BURETTE of the Academy of Belles lettres, the fifth tome.



of writing the gestures with notes; or, if you will, the Dictionary of gestures, (for we shall shew that the ancients had these sorts of Dictionaries, if I be allowed this expression) did not belong to the Rhythmical music, which falls under our present consideration. This supposed the art of writing gestures with notes to have been already discovered and practised; for it was the Hypocritical music or the *Saltation*, which taught this kind of writing. Wherefore we shall defer speaking of it, 'till we treat of the musical art which by the Greeks was called *Ὀρχησις*, and by the Romans *Saltatio*. How was it possible' (some will reply) for the Rhythmical music to subject the comedian who recited, and the player that gesticulated, to the same measure and cadence? I shall answer, that this is one of those things which St Austin says every player knew, for which reason he did not think it worth his while to explain it. But as the thing in question is no longer performed before our eyes, 'tis not an easy matter for us to conceive what St Austin says that every body knew. Tho' the passages of the ancient writers which we shall hereafter produce, prove that the actor who recited, agreed perfectly with the other who gesticulated, and that they fell into the same cadence with the greatest exactness, yet they do not explain the manner they contrived to follow both of them exactly a common measure. We find nevertheless in Quintilian something like the principles, on which the manner of reconciling them was established.

It

It seems therefore by reading a passage of Quintilian, that in order to measure, as it were, the action, and to enable the player who gesticulated to follow the person that recited, they had contrived a rule, which was that three words were equivalent to a gesture. Now as these words had a fixt duration, the gesture must have had likewise a determined and measurable duration. The passage is as follows : <sup>a</sup> *Those who first professed composing the declamation of theatrical pieces, and exhibiting them upon the stage, acted very prudently, by ordering that each gesture should begin and end exactly with the sentence. This was right, for 'tis equally absurd that the gesture should precede the speech, or should continue after it is finished. True it is, that our artists aiming at too great ingenuity were mistaken, when they determined that the time necessary for pronouncing three words, should be that of the duration of the gesture. This is what does not naturally happen, nor is it in the power of art to render it easy to practise. But our artists thought it necessary by all means, to prescribe a method which should regulate the measure of the gesture, which is equally disagreeable, if it be too*

<sup>a</sup> *Hic veteres artifices illud rectè adjecerunt, ut manus cum sensu & inciperet & deponeretur. Aliòqui enim aut ante vocem erit gestus, aut post vocem, quod est utrumque deformè. In illo lapsi nimia subtilitate sunt, quod intervallum motus tria verba esse voluerunt : quod nec observatur, nec fieri potest : Sed illi quasi mensuram tarditatis celeritatisque aliquam esse voluerunt, nec immeritò, ne aut diu otiosa esset manus, aut (quod multi faciunt) actionem continuo motu conciderent. QUINT. Inst. lib. 11. c. 3.*

slow

*slow or too precipitate ; and the principle they established is the best they could hit on.*

I have translated the word *Artifices*, which Quintilian uses, by *those who first professed composing the declamation of theatrical pieces, and exhibiting them upon the stage* ; being induced to give it this signification for two reasons. The first is, that Quintilian does not mean in this passage the professors of eloquence, whom he distinguishes by other names in his Institutes. The second is, that in the chapter where this passage occurs, he speaks very frequently of the practices and customs of the comedians, and gives the name of *Artifices* or *Artifices pronuntiandi* to those whose profession it was to exhibit theatrical pieces. We shall produce in another place one of those passages in which the same author treats very diffusively of the care which those *Artifices pronuntiandi* ought to have, in giving to each comedian a mask suitable to the character of the person he represents.

I shall give here another passage of Quintilian <sup>a</sup>, which may throw some light on the rules given by the *Rhythmica* to measure the duration of the gestures. *Every duration of a measure particu-*

<sup>a</sup> *Et quod metrum in verbis modo, rhythmus etiam in corporis motu est. Inania quoque tempora rhythmī facilius accipient, quam hæc & in metris accidunt. Major tamen illic licentia est, ubi tempora etiam animo metiuntur, & pedum & digitorum ictu intervalla signant quibusdam notis, atque æstimant quot breves illud spatium habeat, inde τετραχόλιον, πενταχόλιον. Deinceps longiores sunt percussiones : nam σημεῖον tempus est unum.*  
QUINT. Inst. lib. 9. c. 4.

larly considered regards only the reciter, who upon beating the time is obliged to pronounce the syllable thereto belonging ; but the *Rhythmus* directs all the motions of the body. He that makes these gestures, must fall into a cadence at the end of each measure, tho' he be allowed to let some of the time of this measure pass, without gesticulating, and to throw into his dumb action, as often as he pleases, some of those silences or pauses which occur very seldom in the Reciter's part. The *Rhythmus* allows this liberty to the Gesticulator, who is satisfied, when he uses of it, to count the intervals he makes, and to mark them for greater certainty, sometimes with a motion of his finger, and at other times with that of his foot, letting four or five durations pass without making any motion. This has been the reason of their saying, when they pause, a repose of four or five durations. Moreover one may slacken without any consequence the movement of the measure in favor of the person that gesticulates, because notwithstanding this slackening, every stroke and rising made by the person who beats the measure, is still equal to one duration.

Tho' the fact, as I have already observed, be certain, yet I find it impossible to explain sufficiently the method taught by the *Rhythmica*, to make the actor who declaimed, and the person who gesticulated, join in such perfect harmony and concert. Very likely they added another character which denoted the time the gesture was to last, to that which pointed out the gesture the player was to use.

With



With regard to the movement which the ancients set as great a value upon as M. de Lulli, M. de la Lande, and our best French musicians; 'tis, methinks, impossible the Greeks and Romans should write it down, as it were, in notes, or that they could fix by means of any character, the precise duration of every measure. They were obliged undoubtedly, in the same manner as we, to depend on the taste and judgment of the person that beat the measure, who made a particular profession of the Rhythmica. True it is, that some modern musicians imagined they could find out the secret of teaching without a living master, the duration of every air, and consequently of transmitting to posterity the movement to be observed in playing it; but it was by the assistance of a clock that those musicians fancied they should be able to compass their design. By marking, for instance, how many seconds the first twenty measures of the *Cbacone* in *Phaeton* ought to last, they attempted to teach the movement proper for beating the measure of this air. But without examining into the possibility of this project, I shall be satisfied with observing that the ancients could not even dream of such a thing, because their clock-work was too imperfect to furnish them with such an idea. 'Tis well known that far from having a second-pendulum, they had not so much as a clock with wheel-work, and that their way of measuring time was by sun-dials, and hour-glasses.

FIN

We



We know that the ancients used to beat the measure at their theatres, and that they marked the rhythmus, which the actor who recited, as well as the person that gesticulated, as likewise the chorus's, and even the instruments, were obliged to follow as a common rule. Quintilian after observing that the gestures are as much subject to measure, as the musical compositions themselves, adds, *"That the actors who gesticulate, ought to observe the signs which are marked by the feet, that is, the beating of the measure, with as great exactness as those who execute the modulations."* By this he means the actors who pronounce, and the instruments that accompany them.

On the other hand we find by two passages in Lucian's *"Ορχησις"*, or art <sup>b</sup> of dancing, a work which contains an encomium on the art of Pantomimes, that there was close to the actor, who gesticulated, a man shod with iron shoes, who used to beat with his feet upon the stage. All appearances induce us therefore to believe, that the occupation of this person was to beat measure with his foot, the sound of which must have been heard by those whose business it was to observe it.

<sup>a</sup> *Atqui corporis quoque motui sua quædam tempora & ad signa pedum non minus saltationi quàm modulationibus adhibet musica ratio numeros.* QUINT. Inst. l. 9. c. 4.

<sup>b</sup> See M. BURETTE's discourse upon the rhythmus.

## C H A P. III.

*Of organical or instrumental music.*

**I**T would be unnecessary to treat here of the structure of stringed or wind instruments, which were made use of by the ancients. The subject has been exhausted, either by Bartholinus junior in his treatise of the wind instruments of antiquity, or by other learned writers. I think it even proper to defer what I have to say concerning the use the ancients made of their instruments in accompanying the declamation of the actors, to that part of this work which treats of the execution of composed and noted declamation. In effect, as one of the strongest proofs that can be produced to demonstrate that the ancients composed and noted the simple theatrical declamation, is to shew that it was accompanied ; we should be therefore obliged, when treating of the execution of this declamation, to transcribe the same passages, and repeat the same reflections already made use of, were we to speak here of the manner of accompanying the recitation. I shall confine myself therefore to say something concerning the musical compositions of the ancients, which were not made for vocal performances, but were to be executed simply with instruments.

The ancients had the same idea as we, concerning the perfection of music, and the use to which it might be applied. Aristides Quintilianus, speaking

ing of the several divisions which the ancients made of music considered under different respects, says that music with regard to the spirit with which it is composed, and the effect expected from it, may be divided into that which afflicts us, that which animates us and renders us gay; and that which calms us by quieting our agitations. We shall give hereafter this passage of Aristides.

We have already observed in the first volume of this work, that symphonies, as well as compositions of vocal music, were susceptible of a particular character, which renders them capable of affecting us differently by inspiring us sometimes with mirth, and sometimes with sadness; one time with martial ardor, and another time with sentiments of devotion. *The sound of instruments* (says Quintilian <sup>a</sup>, the best qualified writer to give us an account of the taste of antiquity) *affects us, and tho' it has no words to express itself, yet it inspires us with various sentiments.*

*'Tis by virtue of the laws of nature* (says the same author <sup>b</sup> in another passage) *that tones and measure have such an effect upon us. Were it not for this, why should the modulations of symphonies*

<sup>a</sup> Cum organis quibus sermo exprimi non potest, affici animos in diversum habitum sentiamus. QUINT. Inst. l. 1. c. 12.

<sup>b</sup> Natura ducimur ad modos, neque aliter enim eveniret ut illi quoque organorum soni, quanquam verba non exprimunt, in alios tamen atque alios motus ducerent auditorem. In certaminibus sacris non eadem ratione concitant animos ac remittunt: nec eosdem modos adhibent cum bellicum est canendum, & cum posito genu supplicandum; nec idem signorum concentus est procedente ad prælium exercitu, idem receptui canente. QUINT. Inst. l. 9. c. 4.

which

*which utter no words, have such a power of moving us? Will any one say 'tis merely by chance that certain symphonies upon great festivals warm the imagination, by throwing the spirits into motion, and others appease and calm them? Is it not manifest that these symphonies produce such different effects, because they are of an opposite character? Some were composed in order to produce a particular effect, and others for quite the reverse. When our troops march towards the enemy to give them battle, the instruments do not play an air of the same character, as when they sound a retreat. The sound our military instruments make, when we are obliged to ask for quarter, does not resemble that with which we charge the enemy. As the ancients had no fire-arms that could hinder the soldiers from hearing in time of action the sound of the military instruments, the use of which was to signify the general's orders, and animate them to battle; they consequently made a particular study of this part of the art of war, which in our times would be quite needless. The ratling of the canon and musketry obstructs the hearing of the signals of a great number of drums or trumpets, which beat or sound at the same time. Now the Romans piqued themselves above all nations for excelling in military music.*

Quintilian, after observing that even great generals thought it not beneath them to play upon military instruments, and that music was in great



esteem in the Lacedæmonian armies, adds <sup>a</sup>: *Of what other use are the trumpets and cornua in our legions? Is it not even highly probable that a great part of our military reputation is owing to our knowledge of military instruments, in which we excel other nations?*

Livy relates a fact <sup>b</sup> very proper for corroborating what has been here affirmed by Quintilian. Hannibal having surprized the city of Tarentum at that time in possession of the Romans, he made use of a stratagem to prevent the garrison from throwing themselves into the citadel, and to make them prisoners of war. As he had discovered that the theatre was the place for assembling the Romans upon any sudden alarm, he ordered the same air to be played as that which the Romans used upon their running to arms. But the soldiers of the garrison soon perceived by the aukward manner of mouthing the trumpet, that it was not a Roman that sounded, wherefore suspecting some artifice of the enemy, they retired into the fortress instead of repairing to the theatre.

Longinus speaks of the organical music, just as we speak of our instrumental. He says that symphonies move us, tho' they are only simple imitations of inarticulate sounds, and have not a per-

<sup>a</sup> *Duces maximos & fidibus & tibiis cecinisse traditum, & exercitus Lacedæmoniorum musicis accensos modis. Quid autem aliud in nostris legionibus cornua ac tubæ faciunt? Quorum concentus quāto est vehementior, tantò Romana in bellis gloria cæteris præstat.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 1. c. 10.

<sup>b</sup> LIV. hist. dec. 3. lib. 25.



fect being. This author understood by *perfect sounds* (to which he opposes the sounds of symphonies that have but an *imperfect being*) those of the recitatives in music, where the *natural sound* being adapted to the words, occurs in conjunction with the articulate sound. To the passage here cited Longinus adds what follows : *Do not we observe that the sound of wind-instruments moves the souls of those that hear them, throws them into an ecstasy, and hurries them sometimes into a kind of fury ? Do not we see that it obliges them to conform the motions of their body to that of the measure, and that it frequently forces them into involuntary gestures ? Instrumental music influences us therefore in a sensible manner, since we perceive it produces the effect intended by the composer. Tho' the inarticulate sounds of this music do not convey words to our ears so as to raise precise ideas ; nevertheless the concords and rhythmus excite various sentiments in our minds. These inarticulate imitations move us as much as the eloquence of an orator.*

I shall give here a passage out of Macrobius, which to some may appear quite unnecessary, because it is only a repetition of what has been said

<sup>a</sup> Οὐ γὰρ αὐλὸς μόνον ἐπιλίθησί τινα πάθη τοῖς ἀκροουμένοις, καὶ αἶον ἔκφρονας, καὶ κυρβαλισμῷ πλήρεις ἀποτελεῖ, καὶ βάσιν ἐνδὺς τινα ἔνθου, πρὸς ταύτην ἀναγκάζει βαίνειν ἐν ἔνθῳ, καὶ συνεξομοῖσθαι τῷ μέλει τὸν ἀκροάτην, καὶ ἄλλοις ὅσοι παντάπασιν, καὶ νῆ Δία φθόγοις κιθάρας ἔδῃ ἀπλῶς σημαίνοντες, ταῖς τῶν ἡχῶν μεταβλαῖς, καὶ τῇ πρὸς ἀλλήλους κρούσει καὶ μίξει τῆς συμφωνίας, θαυμαστὸν ἐπάγει πολλάκις ὥς ἐπίσασιν θίγλητρον. LONGINUS περὶ ὕψους. cap. 34.

on this subject by Quintilian and Longinus; yet I have thought proper to produce it in order to stop the mouths of those, who should attempt to dispute that the ancients were solicitous of drawing the same expressions as we do from music, and that they had, generally speaking, the same idea of this art, as Lulli and La Lande. Since we cannot produce the symphonies of the ancients, which have perished by the injury of time, we can judge of the merit of those symphonies, only by the relation of those that heard them every day, who were witnesses of the effect they produced, and knew likewise with what spirit they were composed.

*The power which music, says Macrobius<sup>2</sup>, hath over us, is so great, that those who sound our military instruments, strike up a proper air for exciting our courage, when we are led to the charge; whereas they play one of an opposite character, when we are called off to a retreat. Symphonies inflame us, divert us, disturb us, and even lull us to sleep. They likewise calm our minds, and afford us comfort under our bodily afflictions and disorders.*

As the distempers of the body are sometimes caused by the agitations of the mind, 'tis not at all surprizing that music should ease and even cure

<sup>2</sup> *Ita denique omnis habitus animæ cantibus gubernatur, ut ad bellum progressui, & item receptui canatur, cantu & excitante, & rursus sedante virtutem. Dat somnos adimitque, nec non curas immittit & retrahit, iram suggerit, clementiam suadet. Corporum quoque morbis medetur.* MACROB. in somn. SCIPIONIS. lib. 2. cap. 2.

under certain circumstances the disorders of the body, by giving relief to the distempers of the mind. That music alleviates and even dispels our chagrin and ill temper, is a thing which every one is convinced of by experience. I am not ignorant that the circumstances under which music may effectually relieve our distempers are very rare, and that it would be quite ridiculous in case of illness to prescribe songs and airs instead of purging and bleeding. Hence ancient authors, who mention cures performed by virtue of music, speak of them as of very extraordinary events.

In fine, as miracles of this sort happen sometimes in our days, the ancients are free from any charge of having been too credulous with respect to the cures here mentioned, or of publishing lies and fables for true histories. To mention it only by the way, this is not the only point on which our own experience has defended them against the accusation of imposture or credulity. Has not Pliny the historian been cleared of several imputations of this nature, which the critics of the sixteenth century brought against him? To return to the cure of some distempers by the help of music; the Memoirs of the Royal Academy of sciences, which are not penned by men of too easy a credulity, make mention in the year 1702 and 1707 of some cures lately performed by the power of music.

We find in Athenæus, Martianus Capella, and many other ancient writers, most surprizing reci-

tals concerning the wonderful effects of the Greek and Roman music. Some moderns, as Meibomius and Bartholinus junior, have collected those facts in their works. I refer the reader therefore upon this subject to the collection of several ancient authors who wrote of music, published and commented upon by the former, and to the treatise *De tibiis veterum*, written by Gaspar Bartholinus. If M. le Fevre of Saumur had seen the latter work before he published his commentary on Terence, perhaps he would not have inserted his fine Latin verses against the ancient flute, and against such as attempt to explain their structure and use.

'Tis proper to recollect, upon reading the works here mentioned, that it was on the Greeks and their neighbours that music produced such marvellous effects. 'Tis certain that the organs of hearing have a greater sensibility in those countries, than where cold and dampness reigns eight months in the year. [As the sensibility of the heart is generally equal to that of the ear, the inhabitants of the provinces situated on the Ægean and Adriatic seas are naturally more susceptible of passion than the French.] 'Tis not such a vast way from the isle of France to Italy: And yet a Frenchman observes upon his coming into Italy, that the beautiful passages of the operas are applauded in that country with transports, which in France would appear like the sallies of a frantic multitude.

On the contrary some of our northern neighbours are naturally less sensible than we of the pleasure of music. Only to judge of them by the instruments

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they



they are most fond of, and which to us are almost insupportable, either by reason of their too great noise; or of their little justness and extent, their ear must certainly be much coarser than ours. Is it likely we should find any great pleasure, generally speaking, in a musical concert performed by trumpets in the very apartment where we are at table? Should we like a harpsichord in our chamber, the touch of which, instead of entertaining us with the soft sound of wire-strings, would ring a peal in our ears? I said, *generally speaking*, because as we are situated between Italy and the countries abovementioned, 'tis natural some of our countrymen should in this respect be like the Italians, and others resemble the northern nations.

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## C H A P. IV.

*Of the Poetica, or poetic music; and of the Melopœia. That there was a Melopœia which did not contain a musical song, tho' it was written with notes.*

WE have seen by the enumeration and definition of the musical arts, that the *Poetica* or poetic music, taken in its full extent, formed only one and the same art among the Greeks; but that among the Romans it made two distinct ones; to wit, the art of making metrical verses of all kinds; and the *Melopœia*, or the art of



composing melody. Having discoursed at large in our first volume concerning the rules the ancients followed in the construction of their verses, we shall omit here what relates to the first of those arts, comprized under the name of poetic music; and content ourselves with treating of the second, which teaches the composition of the melody, and the singing or manner of executing it.

Aristides Quintilianus <sup>a</sup> says in that part of his book, where he treats of the Melopœia, that it taught the method of composing songs, and had different denominations, pursuant to the tone in which they were composed. With regard to this tone, one Melopœia was called *Hypatoides* or low; another *Mesoides*, or middle; and the third *Netoides* or high. The ancients did not divide, as we do, the general system of their music by *octaves*. Their *Gamut* was composed of eighteen sounds, each of which had a particular appellation, as we shall be obliged to observe hereafter. The lowest of those sounds was called *Hypate*, and the highest *Nete*. Hence Aristides denominates the low Melopœia *Hypatoides*; and the high one *Netoides*.

Our author after giving some general rules in relation to the composition, and which are as applicable to the simple declamation, as to musical

<sup>a</sup> Μελοδοποιᾷ δὲ δέκαμις καλῶσκειναι μὲν ταύτης δὲ ἢ μὲν, ὑπατοιδῆς ἐστὶν ἢ δὲ, μεσοιδῆς ἢ δὲ νηιοιδῆς, κατὰ τὰς προειρημένας ἡμῖν τῆς φωνῆς ιδιότητας. ARIST. QUINT. lib. 1.

songs, adds what follows: <sup>a</sup> *The difference between the Melopœia and the Melody consists in this, that the Melody is the song itself written in notes, and the Melopœia is the art of composing it. The Melopœia may be divided with respect to the tone in which it is composed, into the Dithyrambic, the Nomic, and the Tragic. The Nomic (that, as we shall see hereafter, which was used in the publication of the laws) composes in the highest tones; the Dithyrambic, in the middle ones; and the Tragic in the lowest of all. These are the three kinds of Melopœiæ, which may be subdivided into several species, because of some difference there is between the Melopœiæ comprized under the same kind. Such is the Melopœia of tender verses which includes the Epithalamiums; such is also that of comic verses and panegyrics. Thus the Melopœia was the cause, and the Melody the effect. The Melopœia, strictly speaking, signified the composition of songs of whatsoever nature; and the Melody implied the songs themselves. Wherefore we ought not to be surprized to meet sometimes with the word Melopœia, where they should have wrote Melody; since 'tis only the name of the cause put for that of the effect.*

<sup>a</sup> Διαφέρει δὲ μελοποιία μελωδίας· ἡ μὲν γὰρ ἐπαγγελία μέλος ἐστίν· ἡ δὲ ἕξις ποιητική. τρεῖς δὲ μελοποιίας γένει μὲν τρεῖς· δithyραμβικός, νομικός, τραγικός· ὁ μὲν ἂν νομικός τρέπος ἐστὶ νηποειδής· ὁ δὲ dithyραμβικός, μισοειδής· ὁ δὲ τραγικός, ὑπατοειδής· εἶδει δὲ εὐρίσκονται, πλείους, ὥς δυνατόν δι' ὁμοιότητα τοῖς γυνικοῖς ὑποβάλλειν. ἐρωτικοί τε γὰρ καλῶνται τινες, ἂν ἴδιοι ἐπιθαλάμιοι, καὶ κωμικοί, καὶ ἰγχομιατικοί. ARIST. QUIXT. l. 1.

In order to enter upon the explication of the above passage of Aristides it will not be amiss to give some extracts of a book which Martianus Capella composed in Latin, concerning letters and music. This author is indeed later than Aristides Quintilianus; but he is older than Boetius who cites him, and this is sufficient to render his authority of great weight in the subject in debate. According to Capella, <sup>a</sup> *Melos*, the word from whence Melopœia and Melody are derived, signified the *connection between an acute and a grave sound*. I cite Capella's text, according to the emendations which ought to be made pursuant to Meibomius's opinion. As the simple declamation, as well as the song, consists in a series of tones graver or acuter than the preceding tone, and artificially connected, there must certainly be Melody in the simple declamation, as well as in the song, and consequently a kind of Melopœia, which teaches the method of making the connection mentioned by Capella, that is, of composing the declamation. Let us give the whole passage at length, in which the above-cited words occur. <sup>b</sup> *The Melopœia is the art of com-*  

*posing*

<sup>a</sup> *Melos est nexus acutioris & gravioris soni.* MART. CAPPELLA de nuptiis philolog.

<sup>b</sup> *Melopœia est habitus modulationis effectivus; Melos autem est nexus acutioris vel gravioris soni. Modulatio est soni multiplicis expressio. Melopœiæ species sunt tres, Hypatoides, Mesoides, Netoides. Et Hypatoides est quæ appellatur tragica, quæ per graviores sonos constat; Mesoides quæ Dithyrambica nominatur, quæ tonos æquales mediosque custodit; Netoides quæ &*  

*Nomica*

posing the modulation. The Melos is the connection between an acute and a grave sound. The modulation is a varied singing, composed and written in notes. There are three kinds of Melopœia. The Tragic or the Hypatoides, which commonly uses deeper or graver sounds. The Dithyrambic or Mesoides, which employs middle sounds, and in which the progression of the singing is oftner made by equal intervals; and the Nomic or the Netoides, which uses several of the highest sounds. There are some other kinds of Melopœia, as the Comic, which may be all reduced to those abovementioned, tho' each species hath its proper tone. 'Tis not only with respect to the tone that the Melopœiæ may be divided into different kinds; for if in relation to this tone, they are divided into low, middle, and high; they are likewise divided with regard to the intervals they observe, into Diatonics, Chromatics, and Enharmonics; and with respect to the modes, into Phrygian, Doric, and Lydian.

Our author after adding to what has been here cited, some instructions relating to the composition, proceeds to treat of the rhythmus, having mentioned all he had to say concerning the Melopœia.

*Nomica consuevit vocari, quæ plures sonos ex ultimis recipit. Sunt etiam & aliæ distantie quæ tropica Mela dicuntur, aliæ Comiologica, sed hæc aptius pro rebus subrogantur, nec suas magis poterunt divisiones asserre. Hæ autem species etiam Tropi dicuntur. Dissentiunt autem Melopœiæ ipsæ modis pluribus inter se; et genere, ut alia sit Enharmonica, alia Chromatica, alia Diatonica. Specie quoque, quia alia est Hypatoides, alia Mesoides, alia Netoides. Tropis, ut Dorio, Lydio, vel cæteris. Idem ibid.*



#### 44 CRITICAL REFLECTIONS on

To return to Aristides Quintilianus, the following passage <sup>a</sup> contains what he has further to say with respect to the Melopœia, before he enters upon the rhythmus. *The Melopœia may be divided under several considerations into different kinds. Some are Diatonic, others Enharmonic, and others Chromatic. With regard to the tone of the general system in which they are composed, Melopœiæ are divided into those of a high, low, and middle modulation. With respect to the mode, some are Phrygian, others Doric, and others Lydian, &c. In relation to the manner in which the mode is treated, the Melopœia is divided into Nomic, Tragic, and Dithyrambic. In fine, with reference to the intention of the composer, as well as to the effect they are intended to produce, they may be divided into the Systaltic, or that which renders us melancholy; the Diastaltic, or that which enlivens us and pleases the imagination; and the middle, or that which composes a proper Melody for calming our spirit by quieting its perturbations.*

Of all these different divisions of the Melopœia variously considered, there is only one that falls under our present inquiry, that which divides it

<sup>a</sup> Διαφέρεισι δ' ἀλλήλων αἱ μελοποιῖαι, γένει· ὡς ἑναρμόνιος, χρωματική, διάτonos. συστήματι· ὡς ὑπατοειδῆς, μεσοειδῆς, νητοειδῆς. τόῳ· ὡς δωρίος, φρύγιος, λυδῖος. τρόπῳ· νομικῶ, διθυραμβικῶ, τραγικῶ. ἤθει· ὡς φαμέν, τὴν μὲν συσταλτικὴν, δι' ἧς πάθη λυπηρὰ κινῶμεν. τὴν δὲ διασταλτικὴν, δι' ἧς τὸν θυμὸν ἐξεγείρομεν· τὴν δὲ μέσην, δι' ἧς εἰς ἡρεμίαν τὴν ψυχὴν περιάγομεν. ARIST. QUINT. lib. i.

into the low or Tragic, the middle or Dithyrambic, and the high or Nomic, and which consequently makes the same division of the melodies. According to Aristides Quintilianus, and as we ourselves have observed, the Melopœia was the cause, and the Melody the effect. There ought therefore of course to be as many kinds of Melody as of Melopœia.

If we peruse with attention the passages of Aristides and Capella, where the Melopœia is divided into Nomic, Dithyrambic, and Tragic, we shall quickly perceive that it was impossible for all their Melodies to be musical songs, and that several of them could be nothing more than a simple declamation. 'Tis visible that the Dithyrambic Melopœia was the only one that composed what we properly call songs.

In the first place, supposing that some of the Melopœiæ, which were the species of the tragic kind, composed what we properly call songs, yet it cannot be controverted that some of those species composed only a simple declamation. 'Tis not at all probable that the singing of Panegyrics, which was one of the kinds of Melody composed by the low or Tragic Melopœia, was really a musical song. With respect to the singing of comedies, which was another kind of tragic Melody, we shall produce undeniable arguments hereafter to shew, that the singing of the comic pieces of the ancients, tho' written with notes, and supported by an accompany'd recitation, was nothing more in reality than a strict declamation. Besides,

fides, I hope to demonstrate that the Melody of the ancient tragedies was not a musical song, but a simple declamation. Wherefore there was not perhaps in the kind of the tragic Melopœia any one species that composed a musical song.

Secondly, the Nomic Melody could not be a musical singing. It had the name of *Nomic* or legal, because it was principally used in the publication of laws, for *Nomos* signifies a *Law* in the Greek tongue. Besides, the tone in which the high or Nomic Melopœia composed was very proper for rendering the public crier's voice more easy to be heard in the promulgation of the law.

Those who knew how nice the Greeks were in point of eloquence, and especially how offended they were with a vicious pronunciation, find no difficulty in conceiving that some of their towns were so jealous of the reputation of having every thing done in a polite and elegant manner, as not to let the public crier, who was charged with the promulgation of the laws, have the liberty of reciting them according to his own fancy, lest he should chance to give the words or phrases a tone capable of exciting the laughter of jocular people. These republics apprehending lest the mistakes into which their officer might fall in the pronunciation, should reflect a kind of ridicule on the laws themselves, had the precaution of causing the declamation of those laws to be composed; and they even required that the crier who recited them should be accompanied by a person capable of setting him right if he chanced to com-  
mit

mit a mistake. They insisted upon having their laws published with the same assistance, as that which the actors had (a point we shall prove hereafter) who recited upon the stage. Martianus Capella<sup>a</sup> giving an encomium upon music, says, that in several cities of Greece, the officer who published the laws, was accompanied by a harper. It would be unnecessary to observe that the reciter and the harper could never join in concert, if the declamation of the reciter were quite arbitrary. 'Tis evident on the contrary that it must have been subject to rules, and consequently composed. It would not be impossible to find some facts among the ancient writers, which suppose the practice mentioned by Capella. We see, for example, in Plutarch, that when Philip king of Macedon, and father of Alexander the Great, after having defeated the Athenians at Chæronea, intended to ridicule the law they had published against him, he recited the commencement of this law on the very field of battle, as a measured and composed declamation. *Now Philip (says Plutarch<sup>b</sup>) having obtained the victory, was so seized at first with joy, as to fall into some extravagances: For after having drunk heartily with his friends, he went to the field of battle, and there he began to sing in a strain of mockery the commencement of the decree*

[<sup>a</sup> *Quid pacis munia? Nonne nostris, cantibus celebrata?  
Græcarum quippe urbium multæ leges ad lyram recitabant.*  
MART. CAPEL. in nuptiis philolog.

<sup>b</sup> PLUTARCH'S life of DEMOSTHENES. chap. 5.

proposed



*proposed by Demosthenes, pursuant to which the Athenians had declared war against him; raising his voice at the same time, and beating measure with his foot.* DEMOSTHENES, SON OF DEMOSTHENES THE PEANIAN, PROPOSED THIS DECREE. *But soon after, when his drunken fit was over, and he reflected on the danger he had been in, his hair stood of an end.* Diodorus Siculus <sup>a</sup> says, that Philip after having drunk too much wine the day abovementioned, committed several indecencies on the field of battle; but that the remonstrances of Demades an Athenian, and one of the prisoners of war made him enter into himself; and that his concern for what he had done, rendered him more condescending in treating afterwards with the vanquished enemy.

Undoubtedly Athens and the other cities of Greece, who chanced to agree in this article with the Athenians, did not order their laws to be sung; (taking the word *singing* in the signification it bears with us,) when they caused them to be published.

'Tis therefore my opinion, that out of the three kinds into which the Melopœia was divided, when considered with respect to the manner in which it treated its mode, there was only one, to wit, the Dithyrambic which composed musical songs; at the most there were only some species of tragic melody, which might have been properly called songs. The other melodies were only a composed and noted declamation.

<sup>a</sup> DIOD. SICULUS l. 16. p. 476.

As this opinion of mine is quite new in the republic of letters, it becomes me to omit nothing that can contribute to establish it. Before I produce therefore the passages of the Greek or Latin authors, who in speaking occasionally of their music, have advanced things that prove, if I may so express myself, the existence of a melody which was only a simple declamation, I beg the favor of the reader to give me leave to transcribe here some passages of those ancient authors, who in treating dogmatically of music, have sufficiently established this existence.

Doctor Wallis, a gentleman famous for his learning, and for having lived the longest of any man of letters in our days, published in 1699, in the third volume of his mathematical works, Porphyry's Greek commentary on Ptolemy's Harmonics, together with a Latin translation of this commentary. We find by this piece, that the ancient music divided all the operations of the voice into two sorts. <sup>a</sup> The author treats afterwards of the difference we find between vocal sounds. *One of these sounds, says he, is continued, namely,*

<sup>a</sup> Καὶ τὴν μὲν ἀρμονικὴν, γινώσκον φωνῆς ἀνθρωπίνης τὴν καὶ ὀργανικῆς καὶ τῆς ταύτης παρακειμένης, τῖνα τρόπον πεφύκασιν κινεῖσθαι φυσικῶς ἀναστρέφεισθαι, καὶ τῇ ἰδίᾳ περιγίνεσθαι τέλως, ὀριζομένων τὰς δὲ τῆς φωνῆς διαφορὰς ἐξῆς παριστάνων. Δίττη γὰρ φησιν ἡ ταύτης κίνησις· ἡ μὲν λεγομένη συνεχής· ἡ δὲ διασηματική. Συνεχὴς μὲν, καθ' ἣν πρὸς ἀλλήλους διαλεγόμεθα, ὅθεν καὶ λογικὴ συνάνημος καλεῖται. Διασηματικὴ δὲ, καθ' ἣν ᾄδομέν τε καὶ μελωδῶμεν, αὐτῶς μὲν τὴν καὶ καθαρίζομεν· ὅθεν καὶ μελωδικὴ προσαγορεύεται. PORPHYRIUS in Hypomnematis ad Harm. PTOL. cap. i. p. 194.

that which the voice forms in common discourse, and is therefore called the language of conversation. The other sound, which is called Melodious, is subject to regular intervals, and is that which is formed by those who sing, or who execute a modulation, and who imitate such as play on stringed or wind instruments. Porphyry explains afterwards at large the difference there is between those two kinds of sounds, after which he adds : <sup>a</sup> *This is the principle which Ptolemy established in the beginning of his reflections on harmony, the same as that which, generally speaking, is taught by the followers of Aristoxenus.* We have already mentioned who this Aristoxenus was. Thus this division of vocal sounds into continued and melodious, or a sound subject to regular intervals in its progression, was one of the first principles of the science of music. We shall see presently that this melodious sound or melody was subdivided into two species, to wit, into what we properly call singing, and that which was only a simple declamation. Martianus Capella says : <sup>b</sup> *The sound of the voice may be divid-*

<sup>a</sup> Τοῦτων ἐν σχιδὸν παρὰ πᾶσι τοῖς Ἀριστοξενίοις λεγομένων εὐ-  
 ρὴς καταρχὰς τῷ περὶ τῆς ἁρμονικῆς σκέμματι, ὁ Πτολεμαῖος  
 ταῦτ' ἀπαγγέλλει. Id. ibid.

<sup>b</sup> Nunc de prima voce velut de sonitus totius parente, dicemus.  
 Omnis vox in duo genera dividitur, continuum atque divisum.  
 Continuum est velut jube colloquium. Divisum quod in modula-  
 tionibus servamus. Est & medium quod ex utroque permixtum,  
 ac neque alterius continuum modum servat, nec alterius frequenti  
 diffusione præceditur, quo pronuntiandi modo carmina recitan-  
 tur. MART. CAPELLA in nupt. philog. 9.

ed into two kinds with respect to the manner in which it comes out of the mouth : to wit, into continued, and discrete or divided by intervals. The continued sound is the pronunciation used in ordinary conversations. The discrete is the pronunciation of a person who executes a modulation. Between these two sounds there is a middle sort, which partakes of the continued, and the discrete. This middle sound is not so much interrupted as in singing ; but its motion is not so continued as that of the sound in ordinary pronunciation. The voice produces this middle sound, when we pronounce what we call *Carmen*. Now, as we shall see hereafter, *Carmen*<sup>a</sup> signified properly the measured declamation of verses that were not sung, taking the word *singing* in the signification it bears with us.

'Tis impossible to give a better description of our declamation, which preserves a kind of medium between the musical song, and the continued pronunciation of familiar conversations, than Capella has done by the name of a *middle sound*.

I am not afraid of being reproached here with restraining the term *modulation* to musical songs, tho' in other places I give it a much wider sense, by making it import all sorts of composed songs.

'Tis evident by the opposition Capella makes between *Modulatio* and *Carmen*, that he uses the word *modulatio* in the sense in which I have here taken it, by making it signify what we properly call a Musical Song.

<sup>a</sup> Vide notas MEIB. p. 551.



Bryennius tells us how this middle sound or declamation was composed. This Greek author is one of those whom Doctor Wallis has inserted with a Latin version in the third volume of his mathematical works. Bryennius's words are as follow : *There are two kinds of singing or melody. One is that which is used in common conversation, and the other a musical song. The melody used in ordinary pronunciation is composed with accents ; for the voice is naturally raised and depressed in speaking. With respect to singing, properly so called ; that which the harmonical music treats of, is subject to certain intervals. This is said with regard to the rules of the Diatonic, Chromatic, and Enharmonic music.*

It would be unnecessary to remind the reader, that the progression of the declamation may be made by the smallest intervals the sounds will admit of, which cannot be done in music. Even the Enharmonic admitted of no less than quarters of tones. The above-cited passage of Bryennius teaches us not only how the Melopœia that consisted of a simple declamation was composed, but likewise informs us how it could be written with notes. Before we enter upon this discussion, it will not be improper to give a passage of Boetius,

ὁ Τῷ δὲ μέλος, τὸ μὲν ἐστὶ λογιῶδες, τὸ δὲ μουσικόν. Λογιῶδες μὲν ἔν ἐστι, τὸ συγκεῖμενον ἐκ τῶν προσωδιῶν τῶν ἐν τοῖς ὀνόμασιν φυσικὴν γὰρ τὸ ἐπιτείνειν τε καὶ ἀνιέναι τὴν φωνὴν ἐν τῷ διαλέγεσθαι. Μουσικὸν δὲ ἐστὶ μέλος, περὶ ὃ καὶ ἡ ἀρμονικὴ καταγίνεται, τὸ διασηματικὸν τὸ ἐκ φθόγων τὰ καὶ διασημάτων συγκεῖμενον. BRYENNIIUS, lib. 3. cap. 10. De Melopœia.

which

which positively assures us that they noted their declamation as well as their musical song.

*The ancient musicians, says Boetius, <sup>a</sup> to spare themselves the trouble of writing the name of every note at length, contrived characters which should each of them denote a particular sound, and divided these monograms into kinds and modes. Wherefore when a composer has a mind to write a piece of music on verses whose measure is already regulated by the value of the long or short syllables of which the feet are formed, he has only one thing to do, that is, to place his notes above his verses. Thus it is that human industry has found a method of writing not only the words and the declamation, but likewise that of instructing posterity, by means of these characters, in all kinds of singing.*

Boetius commends therefore the musicians of former times, for having discovered two inventions; the first was writing the words and that kind of song called *Carmen*, which, as we shall see hereafter, was only a simple declamation; the second was writing every kind of song, that is, even the musical one, of which Boetius is going to give the notes, at the end of the abovementioned

<sup>a</sup> *Veteres musici propter compendium scriptionis ne integra nomina necesse esset semper apponere, excogitavere notulas quasdam quibus verborum vocabula notarent, easque per genera modosque divisunt, simul etiam hac brevitate captantes, ut si quando aliquod Melos musicus voluisset ascribere super versum rhythmica metri compositione distentum, has sanorum notulas ascriberet, tam miro modo reperientes ut non tantum carmina verbaque litteris explicarent, sed melos ipsum quod his notulis signaretur, in memoriam posteritatemque durare.* BOETIUS de Musica, l. 1. cap. 4.

tioned passage. Thus the declamation was noted as well as the musical song. To judge by the manner in which Boetius expresses himself, the ancients found out the art of writing the simple declamation in notes, before that of noting their music. The first, as we shall see presently, was easier than the other, and 'tis reasonable to suppose of two arts which have pretty near the same object, that whose practice is the easiest, was discovered the first. Let us see now in what manner the notes of the declamation, as well as of the musical song, were written: By this means we shall better understand the sense of the above-cited passage of Boetius.

According to Bryennius, the declamation was composed with accents, and consequently it was necessary, in order to note it, to make use of the same characters which marked those accents. Now the ancients had eight or ten accents and as many different characters to distinguish them.

Sergius an ancient Latin grammarian reckons eight accents <sup>a</sup>, which he defines to be marks of the inflexion of the voice, and calls them the helpers or assistants in singing.

Priscian, another Latin grammarian, and who flourished towards the close of the fifth century, says <sup>b</sup> in his treatise of accents: *That the accent*

<sup>a</sup> *Tenores sive accentus dicti sunt qui naturalem uniuscujusque sermonis in vocem nostræ elationis tenorem servant. Dicitur autem accentus est quasi ad cantus. Sunt autem omnes accentus Latini octo. SERGIUS Comment. in art. DONATI.*

<sup>b</sup> *Accentus namque est certa lex & regula ad elevandam & depressandam syllabam uniuscujusque partis orationis . . . . Sunt au-*  
*tem*

is the law, and a certain rule which teaches how to raise and depress the voice in the pronunciation of each syllable. Our author says afterwards, that there are ten accents in the Latin tongue, and gives at the same time the name of each accent, and the figure by which it was marked. Their names are: *Acute, grave, circumflex, a long line, a short line, a hyphen, diastole, apostrophos, dasæa, and psyle.* The proper figure of each accent may be seen in the abovementioned book. Isidorus of Seville<sup>a</sup> writes the same thing. As the Latins<sup>b</sup> originally had only three accents, the acute, the grave, and the circumflex; and as the rest were found at different times, and some of the new ones were not perhaps generally received, we ought not to be surprized that some grammarians reckoned only eight, and others ten. But these authors are all agreed with respect to their use. Isidorus of Seville says<sup>c</sup> in his origins, that the accents were called in Latin *tones* or *tenors*, because they marked an increase of the voice and the pauses.

Unfortunately that work of Priscian is lost, in which he proposed treating at length of all the

*tem accentus decem quos ita huic operi dignum existimaui pernotare. Acutus, gravis, circumflexus, longa linea, brevis linea, hyphen, diastola, apostrophos, dasæa, psyle.* PRISCIAN. fol. 133. verso.

<sup>a</sup> ISIDOR. Orig. lib. prim. cap. 19.

<sup>b</sup> QUINT. Inst. lib. 1. c. 9.

<sup>c</sup> Latini autem habent & alia nomina. Nam accentus & tonos & tenores dicunt, quia ibi sonus crescit & desinit. ISIDOR. Orig. lib. 1. cap. 18.



uses the accents might be applied to. <sup>a</sup> This work would have probably taught us the use they were of to the composers of declamation. That which Isidorus has wrote in his origins on the ten Roman accents, does not supply the loss of Priscian's treatise. I apprehend that all a composer of declamation did, was to mark on the syllables, which according to the rules of grammar were to be accented, the acute, grave, or circumflex accent that properly belonged to them by virtue of their letters; and that with relation to the expression, he marked on the vacant syllables, by the help of other accents, the tone he thought proper to give them, in order to conform to the sense of the discourse. What could all those accents denote, except the different elevations and depressions of the voice? The ancients applied those accents to the same uses pretty near as the present Jews do their musical accents in singing after their manner, or, more properly, declaiming the psalms.

There is scarce any declamation but may be noted with ten different characters, each of which should mark a particular inflexion of voice; and as the intonation of those accents was learnt at the same time they were taught to read, there was hardly any body but what understood this kind of notes. In this supposition there was nothing easier to comprehend than the mechanic

<sup>a</sup> *Sed nos locuturi de partibus, ad accentum qui in dictionibus necessarius est, transeamus, cujus rei mysterium, Deo præbente vitam, latius tractemus.* PRISCIAN.

part of the composition and execution of the ancient declamation. St Austin was in the right to say that he would not treat of them, as they were things sufficiently understood even by the meanest comedian. The measure was inherent, in a manner, in the verses. The composer's business was only to accent them and prescribe the movement of the measure, after having furnished the instrumental performer who was to accompany them, with some part that was simplest and easiest to execute.

With regard to that melody which was properly a musical song, we are very well informed how it was written. The general system, or as Boetius calls it, the *Constitution* of the music of the ancients, was divided, according to Martianus Capella<sup>a</sup>, into eighteen sounds, whereof each had its particular name. We have no occasion to explain here that some of these sounds might be in reality the same. One was called *Proslambanomenos*, &c. In order, as Boetius observes, to avoid writing the name of each sound in full length on the top of the words, which would have been even impracticable, they invented characters or kinds of figures which marked each tone. These figures were called *semeia* or signs. The word *semeia* signifies all sorts of signs, but it had been particularly adapted to signify the notes or figures here in question. All these figures were composed of a Monogram formed of the first letter of the particular name of each of

<sup>a</sup> De Nupt. Philolog.

the eighteen sounds in the general system. Tho' some of these eighteen initial letters were the same, yet they were drawn in such a manner as to form monograms, that could not be taken one for the other. Boetius has given us the figures of those monograms.

Isaac Vossius points out in a treatise already mentioned, <sup>a</sup> several works of the ancients, which shew how the musical songs were noted in their time. Meibomius treats likewise of this subject in different parts of his collection of ancient authors who wrote of music, and especially in his preface, where he gives the music of the *Te Deum*, written according to the ancient tablature and in modern notes. Wherefore I shall be satisfied with observing that the *femeia* or signs, which were used in vocal as well as instrumental music, were written on the top of the words, and ranged on two lines, whereof the upper one was for the singing, and the lower one for the accompanying. These two lines were not much thicker than those of ordinary writing. There are still some Greek manuscripts extant in which these two kinds of notes are written in the manner above-mentioned. <sup>b</sup> From hence the hymns to Calliope, Nemesis, and Apollo have been extracted, <sup>b</sup> as well as the strophe of one of Pindar's odes, which M. Burette has given us with the ancient and modern notes.

<sup>a</sup> De Poem. cantu. p. 90. ISAAC. VOSS,

<sup>b</sup> History of the academy of the Belles Lettres, tom. 5. p. 162.

The characters invented by the ancients were used in writing music 'till the eleventh century, when Guido of Arezzo found out the present method of writing with notes placed on different lines, so that the position of the note marked its intonation. Those notes were nothing else at first but points which had nothing to mark their duration; but John de Meurs who was born at Paris, and lived under the reign of king John, <sup>a</sup> discovered the method of giving those points an unequal value by the different figures of semi-breves, crotchets, quavers, semi-quavers, which have been since adopted by all the musicians in Europe. Thus we are indebted to France as well as Italy for the present method of writing music.

It follows therefore from what has been hitherto explained, that of the three kinds of Melopœia, there was one, namely the Dithyrambic or *Mesoides*, which composed musical songs; but that the other two, to wit, the Tragic, generally speaking, and the Nomic, composed the declamation.

I shall wave treating here of the Dithyrambic melody, tho' more bordering on the simple declamation than our present music, and shall refer the reader to what has been said concerning it by a learned gentleman <sup>b</sup> who has exhausted the subject.

To come now to that kind of melody which was only a composed declamation, I have no more to say in relation to the part of it called Nomic

<sup>a</sup> In 1350.

<sup>b</sup> M. BURETTE of the Academy of Belles lettres, tom. 5. of the history of this Academy.



or Legal, than what I have already mentioned. In relation to the Tragic melody, I intend to treat more particularly and diffusively thereof, in order to confirm what I have said concerning its existence, by facts which will put it out of all dispute, shewing that notwithstanding the theatrical melody of the ancients was composed and written with notes, yet it was not properly a song. 'Tis for want of having a right notion of the theatrical melody, by taking it for a musical modulation, as likewise by not understanding that the *Saltation* was not a dance after our manner, but a simple *Gesticulation*, that the commentators have given us so bad an explication of the ancient authors who have spoke of their theatre. Wherefore I cannot produce too many proofs in support of a new opinion concerning the Tragic Melopœia and Melody. I shall proceed in the same manner with regard to my sentiment (which is also a new one), on the *Saltation* of the ancients, when I come to treat of the *Hypocritical music*.



## C H A P. V.

*Explication of several passages of the sixth chapter of Aristotle's Poetics. Of the Carmen, or the singing of Latin verses.*

THE best way, methinks, to confirm what I have advanced concerning the Melopœia and the Tragic melody of the ancients, is to shew, that by following my opinion it is easy to understand the meaning of one of the most important passages of Aristotle's poetics, which the remarks of commentators have hitherto contributed to render unintelligible. Nothing can be a better argument of the truth of a principle, than to see it clear up such passages as are extremely obscure without its assistance. The passage is as follows: *a Tragedy is the imitation of an action which is intire and of some extent. This imitation is made without the assistance of narration and*

a "Ἔστι ἡ τραγωδία μίμησις πράξεως σπουδαίας καὶ τελείας, μέγεθος ἔχουσης, ἡδυσμένῳ λόγῳ, χωρὶς ἑκάστη τῶν εἰδῶν, ἐν τοῖς μέρουσιν δρώμενων, καὶ οὐ δι' ἐπαγγελίας, ἀλλὰ δι' ἐλπίς καὶ φόβου περαίνουσα τὴν τῶν τοιούτων παθημάτων κάθαρσιν. λέγω δὲ ἡδυσμένον μὲν λόγον, τὸν ἔχοντα ῥυθμὸν, καὶ ἁρμονίαν, καὶ μέτρον. τὰ δὲ χωρὶς τῶν εἰδῶν, τὸ διὰ μέτρων ἕνα μόνον περαίνεσθαι, καὶ πάλιν, ἕτερον διὰ μέλους. ἐπεὶ δὲ πράττειν οἱ ποιῶνται τὴν μίμησιν, πρῶτον μὲν ἐξ ἀνάγκης αὐτοῖς τι μόριον τραγωδίας ὁ τῆς ὀψέως κόσμος, εἴτα μελοποιῶν, καὶ λέξις· ἐν τέτοις γὰρ ποιῆναι τὴν μίμησιν. λέγω δὲ λέξιν μὲν αὐτὴν τὴν τῶν μέτρων σύνθεσιν· μελοποιῶν δὲ, ὁ τὴν δύναμιν φανερὰν ἔχει παῖσιν. ARISTOT. poet. c. 6.

*in a proper language for pleasing, whose various graces arise from different sources. Tragedy exhibits to our eyes the objects it intends to make use of in order to excite terror and compassion, sentiments so proper for purging the passions. By a language proper for pleasing, I mean phrases reduced and divided by measures, subject to a rhythmus, and productive of harmony. I said that the different graces of the language of tragedy flowed from different sources, because there are some beauties that result only from the metre, and others from the melody. As the tragic imitation is executed on the stage, we must likewise add foreign embellishments to the diction of the Melopœia. 'Tis plain that I understand here by diction the verses themselves. With respect to the Melopœia every one knows its power.*

Let us examine from whence those beauties above-mentioned proceeded, and we shall find that they were not the work of one, but of several musical arts; and consequently that it is not so difficult to understand rightly that part of this passage which says, that they flowed from different sources. Let us begin with the metre and rhythmus which should accompany a language adapted to please us.

Every body knows that the ancients had no dramatic pieces written in prose, but all in verse. Aristotle therefore means nothing more by saying that the diction ought to be divided by measures, than that the measure of the verse which was the work of the poetic art, ought to

serve for measure in the declamation. With regard to the rhythmus, the feet directed the movement of the measure in the recitation of verses. It is for this reason that Aristotle says in the fourth chapter of his poetics, that the metres are the parts of the rhythmus, that is, the measure resulting from the species of the verse ought to regulate the movement during the recitation. No body can be ignorant, that the ancients on several occasions employed verses of different species in their dramatic pieces. Wherefore the person who used to beat the measure on the stage, was obliged to mark the time in the declamation, pursuant to the species of the verses recited, as he accelerated or retarded the movement of this measure according to the sense expressed in those verses, that is, pursuant to the principles taught by the rhythmical art. Aristotle was therefore in the right to say, that the beauty of the rhythmus did not arise from the same cause which produced the beauties of the harmony and Melopœia. The beauty or agreement of measure, and consequently of rhythmus, was the result of the choice which the poet made of the feet with respect to the subject expressed in his verses.

With regard to the harmony, the ancient actors were, as we shall presently see, accompanied by an instrument in the declamation ; and as harmony arises from the combination of sounds of different parts, it was necessary that the melody they recited; and the thorough bass which accompanied them, should perfectly agree. Now



it was neither the metrical nor rhythmical music, but the harmonica, which taught the knowledge of concords. Our author had therefore reason to say, that the harmony, one of the beauties of a language adapted to please us, did not flow from the same sources as the beauty arising from the diction. The latter proceeded from the principles of the poetica, as well as from those of the metrical and rhythmical arts ; whereas the beauty resulting from harmony was owing to the principles of the harmonic music. The beauties of melody flowed likewise from a particular source, that is, from the choice of the accents, or such tones as are suitable to the words, and consequently proper for moving the spectator. The beauties therefore of a language adapted to please us proceeded from different sources. Hence Aristotle was in the right to say, that these beauties had a separate origin.

There are some other passages of the sixth chapter of Aristotle's poetica, which will throw a greater light on our present explication. A few lines lower than the passage here in question, he says<sup>a</sup>, *there are six things necessary to compose a tragedy; the fable or the action, the manners, the maxims, the diction, the Melopœia, and the decora-*

<sup>a</sup>, Ἀνάγκη ἐν πάσης τραγωδίας μίξαι εἶναι ἕξ, καθ' ἃ ποιά τις εἴη, ἡ τραγωδία. ταῦτα δ' εἶναι, μῦθος, καὶ ἦθος, καὶ λέξις, καὶ διάνοια, καὶ ὄψις, καὶ μελοποιΐα. ARISTOT. poet. cap. 6.

zions. Here our author mentions the cause for the effect, by using the word Melopœia instead of Melody. He says likewise at the end of this chapter<sup>a</sup>, after having given a summary account of the fable, manners, maxims, diction, and melody of tragedy : *Of these five parts, the most effectual is the Melopœia. The decorations form also a pleasing spectacle ; but it is not so difficult to succeed therein as in the composition. Besides, the tragedy has its essence and merit independent of the comedians and the stage. To which he adds : Moreover the decorator has generally a greater share than the poet, in ordering the apparatus of the scenes.*

Authors were therefore obliged ; as orators, to invent the fable or action of their pieces ; as philosophers, to give suitable manners and characters to their personages, and to make them advance none but good maxims ; as poets, to give a just measure to their verses, to prescribe the velocity or slowness of their movement, and to compose the melody on which a great part of the success of the tragedy depended. To be surprized at what Aristotle says in relation to the importance of the Melopœia, one must never have seen a tragedy acted ; and to be astonished that he charges the poet with the composition of

<sup>a</sup> Τῶν δὲ λοιπῶν πλείη ἡ μελοποιία μέγιστον τῶν ἡδυσμάτων· ἡ δὲ ὄψις, ψυχασώτικον μὲν, ἀτιμιώτατον δὲ, καὶ ἥκιστα οἰκεῖον τῆς ποιητικῆς. ἡ γὰρ τῆς τραγωδίας δύναμις, καὶ ἄνευ ἀγῶνος καὶ ὑποκριτῶν ἴσιν. ἔτι δὲ κυριώτερά περὶ τὴν ἀπερβασίαν τῶν ὄψεων ἢ τῆ σκηνοποιῆς τέχνη τῆς τῶν ποιητῶν ἴσιν. ARISTOT. poet. cap. 6.

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the melody, one must have forgot what we have already observed and promised hereafter to prove, namely, that the Greek poets composed the declamation of their pieces themselves, whereas the Roman poets flung that trouble upon artists, who tho' neither authors nor comedians, made profession notwithstanding of bringing dramatic pieces upon the stage. We have likewise taken notice that Porphyry for this reason made the composing of verses and melody only one art, which he called the poetic taken in its full extent, because he considered it with respect to the practice of the Greeks; whereas Aristides Quintilianus, who had a regard to the Roman customs, supposed in his enumeration the art of writing verses, and that of composing the melody, to be two separate arts.

But let us hear what one of the last commentators of Aristotle's poetics has said in his remarks on the sixth chapter in relation to those passages which we have here endeavoured to explain<sup>a</sup>. *If tragedy can subsist without verse, it can also do without music. I must frankly own I cannot rightly comprehend how music could have been ever considered as constituting in some measure a part of tragedy; for if there be any thing in nature that can appear foreign and even contrary to a tragic action, 'tis singing. Here I must beg pardon of the inventors of musical tragedies, poems as ridiculous as they are novel, and which would never be endured, had we the least taste for*

<sup>a</sup> DACIER. ARIST. Poeti. p. 82.

*the stage, or were we not seduced by one of the greatest musicians that ever existed. Operas, if I may venture to say so, are the grotesque works of poetry, which are so much the more unsupportable, as they are pretended to be regular performances. Aristotle would therefore have obliged us prodigiously, had he explained how music could have been necessary to tragedy. Instead of that he was satisfied with saying, that its full strength was known: Which shews only that the public was convinced of this necessity, and felt the marvelous effects which singing produced in those poems, in which it occupied only the interludes. I have often endeavoured to dive into the reasons which induced people of such abilities and delicacy of taste as the Athenians, to join music and dancing with tragic actions; and after several researches in order to discover how it could ever appear natural and likely to them, that a chorus which represented the spectators of an action, should dance and sing at such moving and extraordinary events, I have concluded that they followed in this their natural disposition, and contrived to satisfy their superstition. For the Greeks were the most superstitious people in the world, and the fondest of dancing and music; which natural inclination was confirmed by their education.*

I question very much whether this way of reasoning could excuse the taste of the Athenians, supposing that the music and dancing mentioned by ancient authors, as ornaments absolutely necessary in the representation of tragedies were the



same kind of music and dancing as ours ; but, as we have already seen, this music was only a simple declamation ; and this dancing, as we shall hereafter prove, was only a regulated gesture. Wherefore 'tis not the Athenians that stand here in need of an apology.

True it is, that M. Dacier is not the first or only person that has been mistaken on this subject ; his predecessors were deceived as well as he. I shall say the same of the Abbot Gravina, who from his supposing that the Melopœia of theatrical pieces was a musical song, and the *Salta-tion* a dancing after our manner, has given in his book of the *ancient tragedy* <sup>a</sup> a description of the theatre of the ancients, which it is impossible to understand.

I am not ignorant, that Aristotle gives the name of Music in the twenty sixth chapter of his Poetics, <sup>b</sup> to what he had called Melopœia in his sixth chapter. *Tragedy*, says he, *draws a considerable advantage from music and the decorations, which afford us a very sensible pleasure.* But this was because the art of composing the melody, which was to be observed in the piece, as being no less essential than the manners, was one of the musical arts.

This same author proposes the following question in another work, namely, <sup>c</sup> why the chorus does not sing

<sup>a</sup> Printed in 1715.

<sup>b</sup> Καὶ ὅτι ἔ μικρὸν μέρος τὴν μουσικὴν καὶ τὴν ὄψιν ἔχει, δι' ἧς τὰς ἡδονὰς ἐπίστανται ἐναργέστατα. ARISTOT. poet. cap. 26.

<sup>c</sup> Διὰ τί, οἱ ἐν τραγῳδίᾳ χοροὶ, ἔθ' ὑποδαριστὶ, ἔθ' ὑποφρυγιστὶ ᾄδουσιν ; ἢ ὅτι τὸ μέλος ἤκιστα ἔχουσιν αὐταὶ αἱ ἀρμονίαι, ἢ δι' ἡ μάλιστα

sing in tragedies in the Hypodoric or Hypophrygian mode, whereas these two modes are frequently used in acting some personages, especially towards the end of the scenes, and when these personages are to be thrown into an excess of passion. He says, in answer to this question, “ That these two tones are  
 “ for expressing the violent passions of men of  
 “ courage, or of heroes who generally act the  
 “ principal parts in tragedies ; whereas the actors  
 “ who compose the chorus, are supposed to be  
 “ men of a low situation in life, whose passions  
 “ ought not to have the same character upon the  
 “ stage as those of heroes. In the second place,  
 “ continues Aristotle, as the actors of the chorus  
 “ are not so much engaged as the principal per-  
 “ sonages in the events of the piece, it follows  
 “ therefore that the singing of the chorus ought  
 “ to be less animated and more melodious than  
 “ that of the principal actors. For this very rea-

μάλις τῷ χορῷ ; ἥθος δὲ ἔχει ἡ μὲν ὑποφρυγισί, τραγικόν διδ-  
 κῆ ἐν τε τῷ Γηρυονῇ ἢ ἔξοδος κῆ ἡ ἐξόπλισις πεποιήται. ἡ δὲ ὑποδω-  
 ρισί, μεγαλοπρεπὲς κῆ εὐαίσμιον διδὲ κῆ κιθαρωδικωτάτη ἐστὶ τῶν  
 ἀρμονιῶν. ταῦτα δ' ἄμφω, χορῷ μὲν ἀνὰ ἑρμόσα, τοῖς δὲ ἀπὸ  
 σκηνῆς οἰκισιότερα· ἐκείνοι μὲν γάρ, ἡρώων μιμηταί. οἱ δὲ ἡγέμονες  
 τῶν ἀρχαίων, μόνοι ἦσαν ἤρωες· οἱ δὲ λαοὶ, ἀνθρώποι· ὧν ἐστὶν ὁ χορὸς·  
 διδὲ κῆ ἑρμόζει αὐτῷ τὸ γοερόν κῆ ἡσύχιον, ἥθος κῆ μέλος· ἀνθρωπικὰ,  
 γάρ. ταῦτα δ' ἔχουσιν αἱ ἄλλαι ἀρμονίαι, ἥκις αὖτε αὐτῶν ἡ ὑπο-  
 φρυγισί· ἐνθουσιαστικὴ γάρ κῆ βακχικὴ. κατὰ μὲν ἐν ταύτῃ πασ-  
 χόμεν τι· σπῆντικὸι γάρ οἱ ἀσθενεῖς μᾶλλον τῶν δυνατῶν εἰσι· δι-  
 ὅ κῆ αὐτὴ ἀρμόττει τοῖς χοροῖς. κατὰ δὲ τὴν ὑποδωρισί, κῆ ὑποφρυ-  
 γισί, τραγικώτερον· ὃ οὐκ οἰκισιὸν ἐστὶ χορῷ. ἐστὶ γὰρ ὁ χορὸς, κηδευτής  
 ἀπρακτός. εὐνοίαν γὰρ μόνον παρέχειται οἷς πάρεστι. ARIST. prob.  
 sect. 9. quest. 49.

“ son, he concludes, the chorus’s do not sing in  
 “ the Hypodorian or Hypophrygian modes? ”

I refer the reader to Brossard’s musical Dictionary for an explication of the modes of the ancient music. ’Tis impossible to affirm in more express terms than Aristotle does in the last passage, that whatever was recited on the theatre, was subject to a composed melody, and that the ancient actors had not the same liberty as ours, of pronouncing the verses in their several parts with such tones and inflexions of voice as they judged proper.

I allow indeed that ’tis questioned whether Aristotle wrote these problems himself: but ’tis sufficient for our purpose that this work was composed by his disciples, and that it was always considered as one of the monuments of antiquity, and as being composed of course when the Greek and Roman theatres were yet open.

Since the tones in which we declaim are as different from one another, as those in which we compose our music; the composed declamation must consequently have been made in different modes, ’Tis plain their declamation had some modes which were fitter than others for the expression of certain passions, as our music has modes that are better suited than others to this very expression.

That which among the Greeks had the name of Tragic melody, was by the Romans called *Carmen*. Ovid, who was a Latin poet, and consequently was not himself the composer of the declamation of his dramatic pieces, makes use of the  
 phrase,

phrase, *our Carmen and my verses*, where he speaks of one of his pieces which was acted on the stage with applause.

*Carmina cum pleno saltari nostra theatro,*

*Versibus & plaudi scribis, amice, meis.*

OVID. Trist. lib. 5. eleg. 7.

Ovid says *nostra carmina*, because there was only the rhythmus and metre of the declamation that belonged to him; the melody being the work of another person. But he says *my verses, meos versus*, by reason that the thoughts, the expression, and, in short, the verses belonged intirely to him.

We can produce a passage from Quintilian, a writer of the greatest authority on this subject, which will sufficiently demonstrate that the *carmen* included beside the verse, something written on the top of it, to direct the inflexions of the voice which were to be observed in the recitation. He says positively that the ancient verses of the Salians had a *Carmen*. But I had better give his own words. <sup>a</sup> *The verses of the Salian priests have a proper modulation with which they are sung; and as their institution is derived from king Numa, this modulation shews that the Romans, notwithstanding their ferocity in those days, had some knowledge of music.* Now how was it possible

<sup>a</sup> *Versus quoque Saliorum habent carmen, quæ cum omnia sint a rege Numa instituta; faciunt manifestum ne illis qui rudes ac bellicosæ videntur, curam musices, quantum illæ recipiebat ætas, defuisse.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 1. cap. 12.



for this modulation to have been handed down from Numa's time to that of Quintilian, if it was not written in notes? And on the other hand if it was a musical modulation, why should Quintilian call it *Carmen*? He could not have been ignorant that his cotemporaries were accustomed to give every day, tho' improperly, the name of *carmen* to verses which were not sung, whose declamation was arbitrary, and whose recitation was by the ancients called *reading*, because the person that recited them was obliged only to follow the quantity, and was at liberty to use such inflexions of the voice as he thought proper. To cite one of Quintilian's cotemporaries, Juvenal says to a friend of his whom he invites to sup with him, "that during the time of repast  
 " he shall hear some fine passages read from the  
 " Iliad and the Æneid. The person that is to  
 " read them, continues Juvenal, is not one of  
 " the cleverest at his business; but that does not  
 " signify, the verses are such as will always bear  
 " hearing with pleasure.

*Conditor Iliados cantabitur, atque Maronis*

*Altisoni dubiam facientia carmina palmam.*

*Quid refert tales versus quâ voce legantur?*

JUV. sat. 12.

*But my poor entertainment is design'd,*

*I'll afford you pleasures of another kind;*

*Yet with your taste your hearing shall be fed,*

*And Homer's sacred lines and Virgil's read:*

*Either*

*Either of whom does all mankind excel,  
Tho' which exceeds the other none can tell.  
It matters not with what ill tone they're sung,  
Verse so sublimely good no voice can wrong.*

CONGREVE.

In another passage, Juvenal gives likewise the name of *Carmina* to the simple recitation of the hexameter verses of Statius's *Thebaid*, which the latter poet used to read and pronounce himself as he pleased.

*Curritur ad vocem jucundam & carmen amice  
Thebaidos, lætam fecit cum Statius urbem,  
Promisitque diem; tanta dulcedine captos  
Afficit ille animos, tantaque libidine vulgi  
Auditur.*

JUV. sat. 7.

*All Rome is pleas'd, when Statius will rehearse,  
And longing crowds expect the promis'd verse:  
His lofty numbers with so great a gust  
They hear, and swallow with such eager lust.*

MR. CHARLES DRYDEN.

Now as Quintilian explains himself dogmatically in the above-cited passage, undoubtedly he would not have used the word *carmen* to express a musical song, nor applied it in a sense so opposite to the improper signification it had received from custom. But *carmen* originally imported quite a different thing, and besides it was the proper word for signifying the declamation, and determined likewise to its primary and true acceptation, by the very passage in which it was used. In fine

the expression *versus habent carmen* leaves no manner of doubt with respect to the signification which the word *carmen* should have in the passage of Quintilian, and the above-cited verses of Ovid?

The moderns imagining that the word *carmen* had always the improper signification it bears in those verses of Juvenal, where he means nothing more than verses, have mistaken the proper meaning of this word; and this mistake is the cause of their not knowing that the ancients had a composed declamation, which tho' written in notes, was not a musical song. The misunderstanding of another word has very much contributed to conceal this declamation from the moderns. The word I mean is *cantus* with all its derivatives. The modern critics have understood this word, as if it always implied a musical singing, tho' in several passages it imports only a singing in general, or a recitation subject to the direction of a noted melody. They have understood the word *canere*, as if it always implied what we properly call *to sing*. This has been the principal cause of the error they have committed in supposing the singing of the dramatic pieces of the ancients to be a proper singing, because the ancient writers generally make use of the words *cantus* and *canere*, when they speak of the execution of those pieces. Wherefore, before I corroborate my opinion with new proofs drawn from the manner in which the composed declamation was executed on the ancient stage, it will not be amiss,

amiss, methinks, to shew that the word *cantus* signified not only a musical singing, but likewise all sorts of declamation, and even simple recitation; and consequently that when the ancient authors say that the actors sung, this must not, however be understood by taking the word *singing* in the signification we generally give it. The reputation of the modern authors, with whom I differ in opinion, requires good authority for my singularity upon this point. I have no reason therefore to apprehend being censured for the multitude of passages I am going to alledge, in order to demonstrate a fact which two or three of them perhaps would have sufficiently evinced.

## C H A P. VI.

*That in the writings of the ancients the word canere signified sometimes to declaim, and even sometimes to speak.*

STRABO, who flourished under the reign of Augustus, informs us concerning the cause of the improper signification which the word ᾠδὴ and ᾄδειν, that is, *cantus* and *canere*, with their derivatives had at that time. He says, <sup>a</sup> that in the first ages,

<sup>a</sup> Καὶ τὸ ᾄδειν δὲ ἀντὶ τοῦ φράζειν τιθέμενον παρὰ τοῖς πάλαι, ταυτὸ τέτο ἐκμαρτυρεῖ; διότι πηγὴ καὶ ἀρχὴ φράσεως κατασκευασμένης καὶ ῥητορικῆς ὑπῆρξεν ἡ ποιητικὴ. αὕτη γὰρ προσεχρήσατο τῷ μέλει κατὰ τὰς ἐπιδείξεις· τῷτο δ' ἦν ἡ ᾠδὴ λόγος μεμε-



ages, whatever was composed was in verse, and that as all verses used to be sung in those days, people were accustomed to say ᾄδειν or *to sing*, instead of generally saying *to recite* a composition. After the practice of singing all sorts of poems was laid aside, and the custom introduced of simply reciting some kinds of verses, still they continued to give the name of ὠδὴ or *singing* to the recitation of every sort of poems. But there is something more than this, continues Strabo; for they went on with using the word *singing* instead of that of *reciting* even after they began to write in prose. Thus they carried it so far at length as to use the expression of *singing prose*, instead of *reciting it*.

As we have not a generical word in our language which corresponds to that of *canere*, the reader, I hope, will be so good as to excuse the frequent circumlocutions which I have already made and shall still be obliged to make in translating it, in order to avoid the ambiguities into which I should fall, were I to use absolutely the word *singing*, sometimes to express the execution of a musical song, and other times to signify in general the reciting of a noted declamation.

μεμελισμένος· ἀφ' ὧ δὴ ῥαψῳδίαν τ' ἔλεγον, καὶ τραγωδίαν, καὶ κωμωδίαν. Ωστ' ἐπειδὴ τὸ φράζειν πρῶτα ἐπὶ τῆς ποιητικῆς ἐλήγτο φράσεως, αὐτὴ δὲ μετ' ὠδῆς, τὸ ᾄδειν αὐτοῖς τὸ αὐτὸ τῷ φράζειν ὑπῆρξε παρ' ἐκείνοις· καταχρησαμένων δ' αὐτῶν πατέρων καὶ ἐπὶ τῷ πείζει λόγῳ, καὶ ἐπὶ βιάτερον ἢ κατάχρησις διέβη. STRABO Geograph. lib. 1.

Let us produce at present those passages of the ancient authors which demonstrate, that tho' the Greeks and Latins gave the appellation of singing to the declamation of their theatrical pieces, yet this declamation was not a musical singing.

In Cicero's dialogues *de oratore*, Crassus one of the personages, after mentioning that Lælia his mother-in-law pronounced in a plain and simple manner, tho' with too frequent and remarkable accents in her voice, says: <sup>a</sup> *When I hear Lælia speak, methinks I am listening to some of Plautus or Nævius's pieces.* The passage of Cicero, which I have only cited here, shall be given intire upon another occasion. Now 'tis plain that Lælia did not sing in her ordinary conversation; consequently those who recited the plays of Plautus or Nævius, did not sing them. Cicero observes likewise in another work, <sup>b</sup> that *the comic poets rendered the number and rhythmus of their verses scarcely perceptible, to the end they might bear a greater resemblance to ordinary conversation.* This attention to imitate common conversation would have been thrown away, if those verses were to be sung.

And yet the ancient authors make use of the word *singing*, when they mention the recitation of comedies, as well as in speaking of that of tragedies. Donatus and Euthemius, who flourished under the reign of Constantine the Great,

<sup>a</sup> Cic. l. 3. de Oratore.

<sup>b</sup> *At Comicorum senarii propter similitudinem sermonis, sic sunt abjecti, ut nonnunquam vix in his numerus & versus intelligi possint.* Cic. in orat.

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affirm in a treatise intituled: *De Tragædia & Comædia commentatiunculæ*, that tragedy and comedy <sup>a</sup> consisted at first of verses set to music, which were sung by a chorus accompanied with wind-instruments. Isidorus of Seville <sup>b</sup> gives indiscriminately the name of singers, to those who acted tragedies, or comedies. Horace, before he explains in his art of poetry what is requisite to compose a good comedy, defines it to be that which entertains the spectators till the singer says to them: *clap your hands. Donec cantor, vos plaudite, dicat.* Who was this singer? who, but one of the comedians? The actor who played in comedy, as we shall see hereafter. It was common to say of either of them; *that he sung.*

Quintilian complains that the orators in his time pleaded at the bar in the same manner as the actors recited on the stage. We have already given what he says concerning it. Is it to be imagined that those orators sung in the same manner as is practised in our operas? In another passage he <sup>c</sup> forbids his pupil to pronounce such verses as he reads in private in order to study the pronunciation, with the same emphasis as the

<sup>a</sup> *Comædia* vetus, ut ipsa quoque olim *Tragædia*, simplex carmen, quod chorus cum tibicine concinebat.

<sup>b</sup> Sunt qui antiqua gesta & facinora sceleratorum regum luctuoso carmine, spectante populo, concinebant. *Comædi* sunt qui privatorum hominum acta, dictis aut gestu exprimunt. ISID. Orig. l. 18. cap. 45.

<sup>c</sup> Sit autem lectio virilis, non tamen in canticum dissoluta. QUINT. Inst. lib. 1. cap. 10.

*Cantica* were sung on the stage. We shall see presently, that the *Cantica* were those scenes in the play whose declamation was most harmonious. Now it would have been of no manner of use to Quintilian, to debar his pupil from imitating the singing of the *Cantica* in the circumstances in which he forbids it, had this been a real singing pursuant to our manner of speaking.

This same author affirms likewise in a passage which I have already cited, that those who acted in comedies, did not deviate from nature in their pronounciation, at least not so as to disguise her in their language; but that they imbellished the usual manner of pronouncing in ordinary conversation with such ornaments as are allowed by the art. <sup>a</sup> Now I leave the reader to judge whether this be singing. In fine Quintilian after having forbidden the orator, in a passage already cited, to sing like the comedians, adds, that his intention is not to prohibit a sustained declamation, or the *Singing* suitable to the eloquence of the bar. Cicero himself, he says, <sup>b</sup> has acknowledged the reasonableness of this kind of disguised singing. When Juvenal gives an elogium of

<sup>a</sup> *Actores Comici nec ita prorsus ut nos loquimur pronuntiant, quod esset sine arte, nec procul tamen a natura recedunt, quo vitio periret imitatio: sed morem communis hujus sermonis decore comico exornant.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 11. cap. 1.

<sup>b</sup> *Quid ergo? non & Cicero dicit esse aliquem in oratione cantum obscuriorem? . . . . . Ostendam non multo post, ubi et quatenus recipiendus sit hic flexus, & cantus.* Idem ibid. cap. 3.



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Quintilian in his seventh satyre, he says among other things that this orator *sung* well, when he thought proper to take the care and precautions used by the Romans to cleanse the organs of the voice, a practice of which we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

— *Orator quoque maximus & jaculator;  
Et si perfrixit, cantat bene.*—

Juv. sat. 7.

*Good fortune grac'd his action, and his tongue,  
His colds became him, and when hoarse he sung:*

MR. CHARLES DRYDEN.

Is it to be supposed that Quintilian *sung*, when he spoke in public, taking the word *singing* in the signification it bears with us?

But, some will say, when the chorus's of the ancients *sung*, this was a real music; and when the actors *sung*, their singing was like that of the chorus's. Do not you see, says Seneca, <sup>a</sup> *how many different sounds are heard in the chorus's; such as the treble, the tenor, and the bass? The wind instruments are mixt there with men and women's voices. And yet there results but one concert from all this mixture; which is because all those sounds are heard together, without distinguishing any one of them in particular.* This same

<sup>a</sup> Non vides quàm multorum vocibus chorus constet, unus tamen ex omnibus sonus redditur. Aliqua illic acuta, aliqua gravis, aliqua media. Accedunt viris fœminæ, interponuntur tibiæ, singulorum illic latent voces, omnium apparent. SENEC. ep. 84.

passage with the alteration only of a few terms occurs also in Macrobius; <sup>b</sup> who adds this reflexion to it, a *Concord arises here from a dissonance*: All these different sounds form one single concert.

My answer is in the first place, that 'tis not absolutely certain from this passage, that the chorus sung musically after our manner. I acknowledge it appears at first sight impossible that several persons should declaim together in chorus, supposing even their declamation to have been concerted. We cannot conceive that those chorus's could have been any thing else but a confused multitude. But tho' the thing seems impossible at first view, it does not follow from thence that 'tis really so. It would be even presumptuous to give credit so easily to our imagination with respect to possibilities; for we are generally ready to presume a thing impossible when we can find no means of executing it; and most people are satisfied with giving half a quarter of an hour's attention to the inquiry after these means. Perhaps after a month's meditation we should find this very thing feasible in speculation, and six months application would render it absolutely practicable. Besides another person would, very likely, be able to discover ways and means, which are beyond the reach of our capacity. But this discussion would lead us too far: wherefore I suppose that the chorus sung

<sup>b</sup> *Fit concentus ex dissonis.* MACROB. Saturn. lib. I. in proœm.

some of their part in harmonic music, but it does not ensue from thence that the actors sung also.

We our selves have several dramatic pieces in which the actors only declaim, tho' the chorus's sing. Such are the Esther and Athalia of Racine; such also is Psyche a tragedy composed by the great Corneille and Moliere. We have even comedies of this sort, and are very sensible why we have not a greater number of them; 'tis not because this is a bad manner of representing dramatic pieces.

I shall corroborate this answer with one reflection. 'Tis that the ancients made use of different instruments to accompany the chorus, from those they employed in accompanying the recitations. This custom of accompanying with different instruments, proves something in our favor. *When the chorus sung, says Diomedes, the Musician accompanied them with choral flutes; but in the cantics or soliloquies another musician answered them with Pythian flutes.* Supposing however that we are to understand the word *Singing* in its proper sense, when treating of the singing of the chorus, it does not follow, that we are to take it in the same signification when speaking of recitations; nor are our proofs and arguments therefore less convincing.

\* *Quando enim chorus canebat, choricis tibiis, id est, choraulicis, artifex concinebat: iis canticis autem Pythaulis Pythicis respondebat.* DIOM. de arte Gram. lib. 3.

## C H A P. VII.

*Other arguments to prove that the theatrical declamation of the Ancients was composed, and written with notes. A proof drawn from this, that the actor who recited was accompanied with instruments.*

'T IS therefore evident, methinks, that the singing of dramatic pieces, recited at the ancient theatres, had neither passages, nor *Ports de voix* with cadences, nor sustained quaverings, nor the other characters of our musical singing: in short, it was a declamation like ours. This recitation was composed, since it was accompanied with a thorough bass, the sound of which was proportioned in all probability to the sound made by the person that declaimed. For the sound made in declaiming is neither so strong nor so resounding as that which is made by the very same person in singing. In the first place, we do not shake or agitate the air so much when we declaim, as when we sing. Secondly, in declaiming, we do not always impel the air against parts that have so much elasticity, and that break it so much, as those against which we impel it in singing. Now the air resounds more or less, according as it is broken. This is, to mention it by the way, what renders the voice of Italian singers easier to be heard



than that of the French. The Italians form several sounds intirely with the cartilages near the throat, which the French fingers cannot completely form but with the help of the inside of the cheeks.

I am therefore of opinion that the thorough bass, which accompanied the declamation of the actors, produced only a very weak sound. We must not form an idea of it from the thorough bass of our operas; this would only contribute to raise groundless difficulties on a thing that is absolutely decided by the testimony of the most respectable authors of antiquity, who were every day spectators of what they committed to writing.

Cicero says, “<sup>a</sup> that those who were skilled in music, could tell, as soon as they heard the first notes of the prelude of the instruments, whether they were to see Antiope or Andromache; while the rest of the spectators knew nothing at all of the matter.” Antiope and Andromache are two tragedies, of which Cicero makes mention in many parts of his works.

What follows will shew that the instruments did not give over after having played the prelude, but that they continued, and accompanied

<sup>a</sup> *Quam multa quæ nos fugiunt in cantu, exaudiunt in eo genere exercitati, qui primo in flatu tibicinis Antiopem esse aiunt aut Andromacham, cum id nos ne suspicemur quidem. Cic. Acad. quæst. lib. 4.*

the

the actor. Cicero after having spoken of Greek verses, the metre of which was almost imperceptible, adds, that the Latins have also verses which are hardly distinguishable as such, but when the recitation of them is accompanied. He gives for example <sup>a</sup> some verses of the tragedy of Thyestes, which might be taken, he says, for prose, when they are not heard with an accompanied recitation.

The tragedy of Thyestes, from whence he took the verse given in the latin passage underneath, was that which he frequently quotes as written by the poet Ennius, <sup>b</sup> and not that which Varius composed on the same subject.

Cicero in the first book of his Tusculan questions, after giving a passage from a tragedy where the ghost of Polydorus begs that his body may be interred, in order to put an end to the miseries he endures, adds, <sup>c</sup> *I cannot conceive how this ghost could be so tormented as he says, when I hear him recite dramatic verses so vastly correct, and find he joins so well in concert with the instruments.* I refer the reader to Diome-

<sup>a</sup> *Quorum simillima sunt quædam apud nostros, velut illa in*  
THYESTE.

*Quemnam te esse dicam quam tarda in senectute?*  
*Et quæ sequuntur, quæ nisi cum tibicen accesserit, sunt orationi*  
*solutæ simillima.* CIC. in Orat. ad M. BRUT.

<sup>b</sup> *In Tusc. Quæst.*

<sup>c</sup> *Hæc reliquias semiaffi regis, denudatis ossibus;*  
*Per terram sanie delibutam fæde divexarier.*

*Non intelligo quid metuat, cum tam bonos septenarios fundat ad*  
*tibiam.* CIC. Tusc. quæst. lib. 1.

des, \* for the reason why I render *Septenarios* by dramatic verses.

The ghost of Polydorus was therefore accompanied in his recitation. But I shall produce two more passages from the same writer, which are, methinks, so very decisive, that I am afraid the reader will censure me for transcribing any others.

This author, after saying that an orator who grows old may slacken his recitation, adds what follows : “ Let us cite here Roscius, that great  
 “ comedian, whom I have so often quoted as a  
 “ model from whom our orators may copy several parts of their art. Roscius says, that he  
 “ intends to be much slower in his declamation,  
 “ when he finds he grows old, and that he will  
 “ oblige the fingers to pronounce more slowly,  
 “ and the instruments to slacken the movement  
 “ of their measure. If a comedian who is  
 “ obliged to follow a regular measure, continues Cicero, can ease himself in his old age  
 “ by slackening the movement ; by a much  
 “ stronger reason an orator is capable of taking  
 “ this advantage when he is advanced in years.  
 “ The orator is not only master of the rhythmus  
 “ or movement of his pronunciation ; but moreover as he speaks in prose, and is not under  
 “ the constraint of keeping time with any body  
 “ else, he is at liberty to change the measure of  
 “ his phrases as he has a mind ; so that he never

\* DIOM. de art. Gram. l. 3. c. 21.

“ pronounces

“ pronounces at one breath but as many syllables  
 “ as he can utter conveniently.” <sup>a</sup>

Every body knows that Roscius, Cicero's contemporary and friend, was a person of some consideration on account of his talents and probity. People were so much prejudiced in his favor, that when he happened not to act so well as usual, they were apt to say either that he neglected his action, or that he was troubled with an indigestion; a complaint to which good actors are very subject. <sup>b</sup> In fine, the greatest commendation which could be given to men who excelled in their art, was to say, they were Roscius's in their way. <sup>c</sup>

The same author acquaints us in another part of his works, that Roscius kept his word, when he grew old. He then ordered those who accompanied him, as well as those who pronounced some parts of the play for him (this is a point we shall explain hereafter) to permit the movement of the measure which they were all obliged to follow, to be slackened. *'Tis thus your friend Roscius*

<sup>a</sup> *Quoniam multa ad Oratoris similitudinem, ab uno artifice sumimus, solet idem Roscius dicere se quò plus sibi ætatis accederet, eò tibicinis modos & cantus remissiores esse facturum. Quod si ille astrictus certa quædam numerorum moderatione & pedum, tamen aliquid ad requiem senectutis excogitat, quanto facilius nos qui non laxare modos, sed totos mutare possumus? Cic. de Orat. lib. 1.*

<sup>c</sup> *Noluit, inquiunt, agere Roscius, aut crudior fuit. Id. ibid. l. 3.*

<sup>c</sup> *Jam diu consecutus est ut in quo quisquis artifex excelleret, is in suo genere Roscius diceretur. Id. Ibid. l. 1.*



(says Atticus to Cicero in this author's first book of laws) *a acted in his old age; he made the measures last longer, and obliged the actor who recited to speak more slowly; so that the instruments which accompanied them, were under a necessity of following this new movement.*

Quintilian after speaking against those orators who declaimed at the bar as if they were reciting upon the stage, says, *b if this custom must prevail, our orators will be obliged to support themselves in their declamation with lyres and flutes.* What he means here is, that the theatrical declamation is so varied, and there is so great a difficulty in entering with exactness into its different tones, that 'tis necessary when a person wants to declaim as they do upon the stage, to be accompanied by one who can help him to take these tones exactly, and hinder him from making false inflexions of the voice.

This is an expression which Quintilian makes use of, to shew that an orator ought not to declaim like a comedian, because of the ill consequence that follows from declaiming in that manner. According to the idea which the ancients had of the dignity of an orator, it was so improper for him to be accompanied, (a thing which was ab-

*a Ut quemadmodum Roscius familiaris tuus in senectute numeros & cantus remisserat, ipsasque tardiores fecit tibias. Cic. de leg. lib. 1.*

*b Quod si omnino recipiendum est, nihil causæ est cur non illam vocis modulationem fidibus ac tibiis adjuvemus. Quint. Inst. lib. 11.*

folutely necessary to thofe who declaimed on the ftage) that Cicero when he fpoke in public, would never fuffer a mufician to play upon his inftrument behind his back in order to give him the proper tones, tho' this precaution had been authorized at Rome by the example of C. Gracchus. *'Tis beneath an orator*, fays Cicero, *to have occafion for fuch an affiftance in order to enter with juftnefs into the feveral tones he is to ufe in declaiming.*

In fact Quintilian relates <sup>b</sup> that this Gracchus, who was one of the moft celebrated orators of his time, ufed to order a mufician to ftand behind him when he harangued, whole bufinefs it was to give him from time to time the proper tone with a wind-inftrument. It muft be fupposed that other orators followed the example of Gracchus, fince the flute that was employed for the ufe above-mentioned, was called by a particular name *τονόγιον*. We muft not after all this think it fo very furprizing that the comedians were accompanied, tho' they did not fing after our manner, but recited only a compofed declamation.

In fine, we find in one of Lucian's treatifes, <sup>c</sup> that Solon after having fpoke to Anacharfis the Scythian concerning the actors of tragedies and

<sup>a</sup> Cic. de orat. lib. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Contenti finus exemplo Caii Gracchi præcipui fuorum temporum oratoris, cui concionanti confiftens poft eum muficus, fiftulâ quam τονόγιον vocant, modos quibus deberet intendi, miniftrabat.* QUINT. Inft. orat. lib. 1. cap. 10.

<sup>c</sup> Luc. in Gymn.

comedies, asks him whether he had not also observed the flutes and instruments which accompanied them in their recitations, and (to render it literally) which sung with them. We have likewise quoted a passage of Diomedes, which shews<sup>a</sup> that the *Cantica* or Monologues were accompanied.

My conjectures with respect to the composition played by the thorough bass which accompanied the actors in declaiming, are that this composition was different for the Dialogues and the Monologues. We shall see presently that the Monologues were executed at that time in a different manner from the Dialogues. Wherefore I fancy that in the execution of the Dialogues, the thorough bass played only now and then some long notes, which were heard in those passages where the actor was to take up such tones as it was very difficult to enter into with exactness. The sound of the instruments was not therefore a continued sound during the Dialogues, as it is in our accompanyings; but only was heard now and then in order to be of the same use to the actor as the flute was to C. Gracchus. This famous orator used this delicate precaution, when he pronounced<sup>b</sup> those terrible harangues which were designed to set his fellow citizens together by the ears, and which armed against himself the most formidable party of the city of Rome.

<sup>a</sup> *In canticis autem Pythaules Pythicis respondebat.* DIOM. de art Gram. lib. 3.

<sup>b</sup> QUINT. lib. 1. c. 12. AUL. GELL. l. 1. c. 11.

With regard to the thorough bass which accompanied the Monologues or the *Cantica*, (which were both the same thing, as we shall shew hereafter,) I fancy it was more laboured than the other. It seems that it even imitated, and to make use of this expression, that it rivall'd the subject. My opinion is founded on two passages, the first of which is from Donatus. This author says in a passage <sup>a</sup> already cited, that it was the poet and not the profest musician who composed the singing of the Monologues. The other is taken from a treatise against public spectacles, which we find among the works of S. Cyprian. This author says <sup>b</sup> of the players on instruments who belonged to the theatre : *one draws mournful sounds from his flute ; another contends with the chorus who shall best be heard ; or else he vies with the actor's voice, endeavouring to articulate his blowing by the help of the suppleness of his fingers.*

I am not ignorant, that in the opinion of the most judicious critics the above mentioned treatise on public spectacles does not belong to S. Cyprian ; wherefore a quotation from it would not be of any great authority, were we disputing upon a theological question. But with relation to the subject here in debate, the testimony of this writer

<sup>a</sup> *Modis cantica temperabantur non a poeta, sed a perito artis Musices factis.* DONAT. in frag. de Trag. & Com.

<sup>b</sup> *Alter lugubres sonos spiritu tibiam instante moderatur. Alter cum choris & cum hominis canora voce contendens spiritu suo, loqui digitis elaborat.* CYPR. de Spectac.



is of sufficient weight for my purpose. All that is requisite for this end, is that the author of this treatise, which has been read and known for many ages, was living when the theatres of the ancients were still open. Now whoever this writer was, he composed this work only to shew that a Christian should not assist at the shews or spectacles of those times ; that he ought not, as S. Austin says, <sup>a</sup> partake of the infamies of the theatre, of the extravagant impieties of the circus, or the cruelties of the amphitheatre. What I have said here concerning the treatise against spectacles attributed to S. Cyprian, may also be applied, (to avoid repeating it elsewhere) to some writings which go under the name of S. Justin Martyr, tho' the critics do not allow them to be his. 'Tis sufficient that those writings <sup>b</sup> which are very ancient, were composed whilst the theatres were yet open, to ascertain the facts which I endeavour to support by their authority.

This refined study of the several artifices capable of throwing strength and ornament into the declamation, and these delicacies in the art of displaying the voice, will not be esteemed as whimsical extravagancies by such as are acquainted with ancient Greece and Rome. Eloquence in those days was not only the road towards making one's fortune, but was likewise, if I may so express myself, the fashionable merit. A young nobleman of the highest rank, one whom in a

<sup>a</sup> S. AUG. *Serm.* 198.

<sup>b</sup> Ep. *ad* ZENAM.

jocular style we may call *the fine flower of the court*, valued himself as much for haranguing well, and for pleading with applause in his friend's defence, as the nobility of our days pique themselves for a spruce equipage and a smart fashionable dress. His talent of pleading used to be extolled even in verses of gallantry. Horace speaking to Venus of one of those gentlemen of a *smart air*, says,

*Namque et nobilis & decens  
Et pro sollicitis non tacitus reis ;  
Et centum puer artium  
Latè signa feret militiæ tuæ.*

HOR. Car. lib. 4. Od. 1.

*For he is great in charms,  
The chiefest honor of the bar,  
He'll make successful war,  
And spread the glory of thy arms.*

CREECH.

We may easily form an idea of the great esteem the ancients had for this profession, by reflecting that the public, whom young people are so desirous of pleasing, shewed as much regard and veneration for a young gentleman celebrated for his eloquence, as for a person famous for the military art. In fine, it was fashionable in those days even for the sovereigns to speak in public. They piqued themselves upon composing their own discourses; and 'tis remarkable that Nero was the first Roman Emperor who had his harangues made by another hand.

Suetonius

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Suetonius and Dion inform us that this Prince was so well versed in the art of Declamation, that he acted the very principal parts in the tragedies of Canacea, Orestes, Œdipus, and *Hercules furens*. The first of these authors <sup>a</sup> relates an adventure that happened at a representation of *Hercules furens*, which must have entertained the assembly as much as any comic scene. “ A soldier of the  
“ guards, who had not been long in the service,  
“ and was then centinel upon the stage, under-  
“ took to defend his Emperor against the other  
“ actors who were going to chain him, in that  
“ part of the play in which Hercules is hand-  
“ cuffed.”

I shall produce here another example, which is of far greater weight. Tacitus relates, <sup>b</sup> that Thrasea Pætus (that illustrious Roman Senator, whom Nero put to death, when after massacring such a number of eminent men he wanted to extirpate even virtue itself) played a part in a tragedy acted at the theatre of the city of Padua where he was born.

<sup>a</sup> *Inter cætera cantavit Canacem parturientem, Orestem matricidam, Oedipodem excæcatum, Herculem insanum. In qua fabula fama est tyrunculum militem ad custodiam aditus positum, cum eum onerari catenis ac vinciri, sicut argumentum postulabat, videret, accurrisse ferendæ opis gratiâ.* SÆTON. in NERONE.

<sup>b</sup> *Quia idem THRASEA PATAVII unde ortus erat, ludis Cesticiis a Trojano ANTENORE institutis, habitu tragico cecinerat.* TACIT. Annal. lib. 16.

## C H A P. VIII.

*Of wind and stringed instruments which were used in the accompanyings of the ancients.*

TO return to the thorough bass; we find in an antique Low-relieve what we have already seen in Cicero, that is, that the instruments did not cease after the prelude, but continued to play in order to accompany the actor. Bartholinus junior, who composed at Rome his book on the *flutes of the ancients*, gives us in this work <sup>a</sup> a plate ingraved from an antique Low-relieve, which represents a comic scene between two actors. One of them, who is dressed in a long robe, and seems to be the master, takes hold of his slave with one hand, and with the other he holds a kind of a girth with which he endeavours to strike him. Two other actors, masked as the former, after the manner of the Roman comedians, come upon the stage, at the further end of which we see a man standing who accompanies them with his flute.

This thorough bass was generally composed of flutes and other wind-instruments, which the Romans comprized under the name of *Tibiæ*. They used also some of those instruments, whose strings were stretched in a kind of hollow frame, the concavity of which produced pretty near the same effect as the belly of our viols. According as this

<sup>a</sup> BARTHOLIN. jun. de Tib. Vet. c. 10. p. 220.



frame was made, and according to the particular configuration of the belly, those instruments received different names, some of them being called *Testudines*, and others *Citharæ*, that is, Lyres or Harps.

As they wanted at first to draw from those instruments a greater variety of tones than they had difference of strings, they shortened the string from which they intended to extract an acuter sound than that which it gave when only struck over the concave part, by pinching it with two fingers of the left hand, which were probably armed with ivory thimbles, whilst they made it resound with the right hand. 'Tis with this hand the players on the lyre held a kind of short bow, which was made only of a piece of ivory, or some other hard matter, shaped to the use for which they designed it, and by the Latins called *pesten*. The ancients added afterwards so many strings to their lyre, that they had no further occasion for this artifice.

Ammianus Marcellinus, an author who lived in the fourth century, says <sup>a</sup> that there were some lyres as big as calashes. In fact, it appears that as early as Quintilian's time, who wrote two centuries before Ammianus Marcellinus, each sound had its particular string in the lyre. *The musicians*, says Quintilian, <sup>b</sup> *having divided all*

<sup>a</sup> AMM. histor. l. 14.

<sup>b</sup> *Cum in cithara quinque constituerunt sonos, plurima deinde varietate complent spatia illa nervorum, atque iis quæ interposuerunt, inserunt alios, ut pauci illi transitus multos gradus habeant.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 12. cap. 10.

*the sounds of the lyre into five scales, each of which has several degrees, they have placed between the strings which give the first tones of each of those scales, other strings which give intermediate sounds; and these strings have been multiplied in such a manner, that to pass from one of the five master strings to the other, there are as many strings as there are scales.*

Our stringed instruments that have a *jugum* or neck, by the help of which we can easily draw different tones from the same string, which we shorten when we have a mind, by pressing it against the neck, would have been much fitter for accompanying; especially as we touch them with a string of a very great length and armed with hair, whereby the sounds are easily connected and prolonged, which the ancients could not effect with their bow. But I am apt to think that they were strangers to stringed instruments with necks; at least we meet with no such thing in any of the ancient monuments. For this very reason, in all probability, the ancients chose rather to accompany with their wind-instruments, than with their lyres, tho' \* in process of time they gave the latter thirty or forty principal and subsidiary strings. And yet they had a vast number of stringed instruments, the construction and use of which is lost. But the wind-instruments are so proper for accompanying, that we make use of them in our thorough bases, tho' we have viols and violins of several sorts.

\* Onomast. Poll.

Nevertheless the ancients used sometimes their stringed instruments in accompanying those who recited tragedies. This is manifest from the ancient *scholia* on the Greek Tragic poets, and from a treatise of Plutarch on music. Horace's art of poetry supposes also this practice; and Dion relates that in Nero's time they made use of stringed instruments in the representation of some tragedies.

'Tis easy to comprehend, after what has been hitherto said, why the ancients marked so exactly at the bottom of the titles of Terence's comedies, the name of the wind-instruments they used in the representation of each piece, as an information without which it was not so easy to know what effect several scenes must have produced in the execution, or as a necessary instruction to those who should chuse to bring them again upon the stage. The extent of each kind of flute was very limited in Terence's time, because those instruments had then but a small number of holes. Wherefore this instruction prevented people's being mistaken with respect to the kind of flute they were to use, as well as in regard to the tone in which they were to recite several passages of the comedies of this poet.

They not only changed the flutes, when the chorus sung, but they changed them likewise in the recitatives. Donatus informs us that they made use of a kind of flutes which the ancients called *Tibiae dextrae*, and whose tone was very deep, to accompany the serious passages of the comedy;

comedy; and used two other kinds of flutes to which the ancients gave the name of Left-handed; and Tyrian or *Sarranæ*, to accompany the more jocund scenes. The passages of these scenes are naturally pronounced with a more elevated tone of voice than the serious parts of a play; wherefore the tone of these flutes was shriller and acuter than that of the right-handed flutes. When the scenes were sometimes serious and sometimes merry, they used all these kinds of flutes alternately. <sup>a</sup> This passage, methinks, throws a great light on the titles of Terence's comedies, which have frequently puzzled the most learned commentators.

The Romans, when Donatus wrote, had four different kinds of comedies, pursuant to what we have observed in the first volume of this work. Those of the first sort were called *Togatæ*, or the long-robed comedies, and were very serious: The *Tabernariæ* were less so: The *Atellanæ* in all probability resembled the latter in this respect; and the *Mimi* were downright farces. We must not therefore be surprized at the minute description which Donatus gives us, when speaking in general of the flutes they used in accompanying the recitation of comedies.

<sup>a</sup> *Dextræ tibie sua gravitate seriam comœdiæ dictionem pronuntiabant. Sinistræ & Sarranæ hoc est Tyriæ acuminis suavitate jocosum in comœdia ostendebant. Ubi autem dextrâ & sinistrâ acta fabula inscribebatur, mistim jocos & gravitatem denunciabat.* DONAT. fragm. de Tragœd. & Comœd.



This passage of Donatus clears up a place in Pliny, where this historian says, <sup>a</sup> *that to make left-banded flutes they made use of the bottom of that very same reed, whose top was used in making right-banded flutes.* As the bottom of the reed was thicker than the top, it must have produced a shriller and acuter sound; and the top must consequently have made a deeper and graver sound. The reason of this is to be found in books that treat of natural philosophy.

But it will be objected here, that I seem to commend the ancient actors for a thing that is generally esteemed a vice; for when a person says that an actor sings, he is supposed to condemn him. I answer, that this expression includes a censure indeed in our common way of understanding it, but this is owing to the limited sense in which we are accustomed to use the word *sing*, when we employ it in speaking of the theatrical declamation. 'Tis unusual at present to say an actor sings, except when he sings unseasonably; when he falls injudiciously into improper exclamations; and when with swelling tones and an emphasis contradicted by the sense of the verse, he throws a forced pathetic into his declamation, which is always ridiculous when false. An actor is not said to sing, when he makes a proper application of the pauses and different accents and tones of the voice; and, in fine, when he employs

<sup>a</sup> *Eam arundinem quæ radicem antecesserat lævæ tibie convessere, quæ cacumen dextræ.* PLIN. lib. 16. cap. 36.

a declamation the nearest to musical singing, in passages where the sense of what he recites will permit it. We do not say of the actresses who still favors us with acting now and then the part of Phædra in Racine's tragedy, that she sings the recital which commences with these words :

*Juste ciel ! Qu'ai-je fait aujourd'hui ?* <sup>a</sup>

*Just heav'ns ! alas what have I done to-day !*

Tho' her declamation differs then from a musical singing, only because the sounds which a person forms in declaiming are not vibrated separately, nor perfected in the same parts of the organs of speech, as those that are formed by a person that sings.

'Tis obvious that the vicious singing here spoken of, cannot be imputed to the actors of antiquity. They used all of them to make, as I shall shew hereafter, a long apprenticeship of their art, and they generally recited a declamation composed by men who made this their particular profession.

<sup>a</sup> Tragedy of PHÆDRA. Act 3.



## C H A P. IX.

*Of the difference there was between tragic and comic declamation. Of the composers of declamation. Reflections concerning the art of writing with notes.*

**T**IS incontestable that the tragic declamation of the ancients must have been graver and more harmonious than their comic declamation. Now this comic declamation was more musical and varied than the pronunciation used in ordinary conversation. Quintilian says, <sup>a</sup> “ That those who acted in comedy, imitated indeed in some measure the pronunciation of familiar conversation, tho’ they did not copy it intirely. They imbellish, he adds, their pronunciation by such ornaments and elegancies as the comic declamation will admit of.”

Plato after observing that poets, who attempt to write tragedies and comedies, do not succeed in both alike, adds, that the tragic and comic kinds demand each a particular turn of mind; and he observes also, <sup>b</sup> *That the actors who de-*

<sup>a</sup> *Quod faciunt actores comici, qui nec ita prorsus, ut nos loquimur, pronunciant, quod esset sine arte; nec procul tamen à naturâ recedunt, quo vitio periret imitatio: sed morem communis hujus sermonis decore comico exornant.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 2. cap. 11.

<sup>b</sup> *Ἐπεὶ παρὰ τὰ δοκῶντα ἐγὼς ἀλλήλων εἶναι δύο μιμήματα δύνανται οἱ αὐτοὶ ἅμα εὖ μιμεῖσθαι, οἷον κωμῳδίαν καὶ τραγῳδίαν ποιῶντες.* PLATO de Repub. l. 3.

*claim in tragedies, are not the same as those who recite in comedies.* We find by several other passages of the ancient writers, that the profession of acting in tragedies, and that of acting in comedies, were absolutely distinct; and that it very seldom happened that the same person attempted to appear in both. Quintilian says, \* That Æsopus declaimed much more gravely than Roscius, because the former professed acting in tragedy, whereas the latter acted only in comedy. Thus each of them had contracted the manners of that kind of the drama which he particularly took up with. This is the very character which Horace gives the latter.

*Quæ gravis Æsopus, quæ doctus Roscius egit.*

Lucian in his treatise on dancing says, that a tragic actor makes a great stir and bustle on the stage, that he turns and tosses himself about like a frantic person; and that he sings such plaintive strains as are scarce supportable in a woman. Who can bear, continues the same author, to hear a Hercules clad with a Lion's skin, and with his club in his hand, quavering verses on the stage which contain the recital of his labors?

The definition the ancients made of tragedy and comedy, which we have given in its proper place, is sufficient alone to convince us, that their manner of reciting these dramatic poems was very different. I shall be satisfied therefore with

\* Roscius citator, Æsopus gravior fuit, quod hic tragedias, ille comœdias egit. QUINT. Inst. lib. II. cap. 3.



adding to what has been already said, that the actors who played in comedy, were shod with a kind of sandal called *foccus*, whereas those who declaimed in tragedy, <sup>a</sup> put on the *cothurnus*, a kind of buskin, the sole of which was of very thick wood, which made them appear of a taller size than the generality of men, according to the relation of Lucian, Philostratus, and several other writers who saw them every day. Lucian informs us, <sup>b</sup> that they used to quilt their body, in order to make their enormous height appear proportionable; and what he advances concerning this subject, is confirmed in a letter attributed to Justin martyr <sup>c</sup>.

The dresses, masks, and decorations used in the representation of tragedies, <sup>d</sup> were likewise different from those that were used in comedies. In particular with regard to the decorations; those that were used in tragedy, <sup>e</sup> represented palaces and other superb edifices; whereas comic decorations exhibited only private houses and other plain buildings. In fine, Horace and all the authors of antiquity who speak occasionally of the tragic declamation of the ancients, make use of expressions which plainly indicate that it was a kind of *singing*. This is one of the objections alledged against it by those ancient authors, who for several reasons had a dislike to it. Justin martyr

<sup>a</sup> Vita APOLLON. l. 6.

<sup>b</sup> LUCIAN. in Orchesi.

<sup>c</sup> Epist. ad ZENAM & SARENUM.

<sup>d</sup> Onom. POLL. lib. 4. cap. 8.

<sup>e</sup> VITRUV. lib. 5. cap. 8.

in the abovementioned work, mentions it as a kind of *bawling* <sup>a</sup>. The author of a treatise against <sup>b</sup> the spectacles of the ancients, attributed to St Cyprian, calls it *the noisy raving of a tragic voice*.<sup>c</sup> Tertullian in a little work composed on the same subject, says, <sup>c</sup> that *the tragic actor raises his voice as loud as he can*. Apuleius <sup>d</sup> makes use of the same terms to express the same thing : *the comedian recites, but the tragedian rants*. Lucian, who has given us a curious description of tragic and comic personages in the conversation between Solon and Anacharsis, makes the Tartarian philosopher say, <sup>e</sup> that the comic actors do not declaim with so much emphasis as those who recite tragedies.

Wherefore we see Quintilian vexed to that degree, as to rail openly against those professors of eloquence, who made their scholars sing or declaim, in the same manner as the actors declaimed on the stage. He inveighs likewise against the orators who pleaded thus at the bar. <sup>f</sup> 'Tis not from any whimsical antipathy against the comedians that Quintilian forbids his orators to imitate a theatrical declamation ; he had no more aversion to them than Cicero. He tells us that

<sup>a</sup> JUST. mart. Ep. ad ZENAM & SARENUM.

<sup>b</sup> *Illas magnas tragicæ vocis insanias.* S. CYPR. de Spectac.

<sup>c</sup> *Tragædo vociferante.* TERTUL. de Spectac.

<sup>d</sup> *Comædus sermocinatur, tragædus vociferatur.* APUL. florid. l. 3.

<sup>e</sup> LUCIAN. in Gymn.

<sup>f</sup> QUINT. Inst. lib. 11. c. 3.

Demosthenes was obliged to Andronicus the comedian for declaiming as well as he did; and he not only allows his pupil, who is desirous of advancing in eloquence, to learn the art of gesture, but he even consents to his receiving lessons a little while from a comedian, <sup>a</sup> and to his studying under this master the principles of the art of pronunciation. In another passage <sup>b</sup> he says, his eleve ought to learn many things of a comedian.

I shall proceed with giving here several passages of the ancient authors, which will contribute, methinks, to establish my opinion, or at least will help to clear up the matter. These passages have not been as much attended to as they deserved, because they are buried, as it were, in the several subjects, which occasioned those authors to write. The quotations I shall make will command more attention, when collected together, because of the assistance they will lend one another towards dispelling the obscurity in which they seem to be involved.

Whosoever is acquainted with ancient Greece, is not surprized to hear that the poets themselves made the declamation of their pieces. *Those who were formerly musicians, were likewise poets*, says Cicero, <sup>c</sup> speaking of the ancient Greek poets who

<sup>a</sup> *Dandum aliquid comædo quoque, dum eatenus quatenus pronunciandi scientiam futurus orator desiderat.* QUINT Inst. lib. 1. cap. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Debet etiam docere comædus quomodo narrandum, &c.* Idem ibid. l. 1. cap. 10.

<sup>c</sup> *Musici qui erant quondam iidem poetæ.* Cic. de orat. lib. 3.

had found out the singing and different species of verses.

The art of composing the declamation of theatrical pieces was a particular profession at Rome. In the titles prefixt to Terence's comedies, we see the name of the person who composed the declamation, in Latin, *qui fecerat modos*; together with the names of the author of the poem, and the chief of the company of comedians. I have already acquainted the reader of the use which was generally made of the word *modos*. It was customary, according to Donatus,<sup>a</sup> for the person who composed the declamation of a piece, to prefix his name to it in conjunction with the names of the poet and the principal player. The declamation especially of the *Cantica*, or Monologues which was executed in a particular manner, as we shall explain hereafter, was never set to music by the poet, but by men grown perfect in the knowledge of the musical arts, and whose profession it was to represent the dramatic pieces that were composed by others. These are the artists whom Quintilian calls *artifices pronuntiandi* in a passage which we shall produce hereafter. Donatus, whom we have just now cited, says,<sup>b</sup> *the cantica were set to music, not by the poet, but by a person skilled in music.*

<sup>a</sup> *Qui modos faciebat, nomen in principio fabulae & scriptoris & actoris & suum superimponebat.* DONAT. fragm. de trag. & comed. juxta emendationem GERARDI VOSSII Poet. lib. 2. cap. 28.

<sup>b</sup> *Modis cantica temperabantur, non a poeta, sed a perito artis musices factis.* Id. ibid.



Cicero makes use of the same expression, *facere modos*, to signify those who composed the declamation of theatrical pieces. After observing that Roscius purposely declaimed some parts with a more careless gesture, than the sense of the verses seemed to require: and after saying that the same Roscius threw a kind of shade into his action in order to render the beauty of some passages more conspicuous, he adds, “ the success of  
“ this practice is so certain, that the poets and  
“ composers of declamation have taken notice of  
“ it as well as the comedians; and they all know  
“ how to make a proper use of it <sup>a</sup>. ”

Those composers of declamation artificially raised, depressed, and varied the recitation. The actors were obliged sometimes to pronounce a passage according to the notes, lower than the sense seemed to require; but this, that the higher tone, to which he was obliged to mount

<sup>a</sup> *Nunquam agit hunc versum Roscius eo gestu quo potest.*

*Nam sapiens virtuti honorem, præmium, haud prædam petit.  
Sed abjicit prorsus ut in proximos,*

*Ecquid video? ferro septus possidet ædes sacras,*

*Incidat, aspiciat, admiretur, stupe scat.*

*Quid ille alter? Quid petam præsidii?*

*Quàm leniter, quam remisè, quam non actuosè? instat enim,*

*O Pater! O Patria! O Priami domus!*

*In quo commoveri tanta actio non posset, si esset consumpta superiore motu & exhausta. Neque id actores prius viderunt quàm ipsi poetæ, quam denique illi etiam qui fecerunt modos a quibus utrisque summittitur aliquid, deinde augetur, extenuatur, inflatur, variatur, distinguitur. CIC. de orat. lib. 3.*

at the third subsequent verse, should make a greater impresson. 'Tis thus the actresses performed, whom Racine himself taught to play the part of Monimia in Mithridates. Racine, who was as great a declaimer as poet, learnt her to lower her voice in pronouncing the following verses, more a great deal than the sense seems to require.

—*Si le sort ne m'eut donnée à vous,  
Mon bonheur dépendoit de l'avoir pour époux.  
Avant que votre amour m'eut envoyé ce gage,  
Nous nous aimions* <sup>a</sup>.

*Had not the fates at length decreed me thine,  
I should have liked, in happy wedlock join'd,  
His chaste embrace: Before you deigned to love  
Your slave, my lord; we fondly lov'd each other.*

In order to enable her to take a tone with ease an octave above that in which she had said these words, *Nous nous aimions*, we fondly loved each other; so as to pronounce *Seigneur, vous changez de visage*, My lord, you change countenance, an octave higher. This extraordinary *port de voix* in the declamation, was admirably well calculated to express the disorder of mind in which Monimia must have been at the moment she perceived, that her facility in believing Mithridates, who wanted only to get her secret out of her, had thrown herself and her lover into the greatest extremity of danger.

To understand the passages of the ancients, which treat of their theatrical representations, it is

<sup>a</sup> Act 3. Scene 3.

necessary, methinks, to have a knowledge of what passes at our modern theatres, and even to consult such as profess the arts that have some relation at least to those in use among the ancients, but whose practice at present is lost. Such were the art of gesture, and that of composing and writing the declamation with notes. The commentaries written upon these passages by some learned gentlemen, whose knowledge of life was confined to their closets, afford us but very little light towards clearing them up. I should be as well pleased with reading a commentary upon Tacitus, written by a Carthusian monk.

We are informed by Quintilian, that those *qui faciebant modos*, or the composers of declamation, were afterwards called *artifices pronuntiandi*, that is, translating it literally, *the artists of pronunciation*. Wherefore, says Quintilian, <sup>a</sup> *in pieces composed for the stage, the artists of pronunciation, &c.* I shall give this passage intire, when I come to treat of the masks used by the ancient comedians.

We shall find no difficulty in conceiving how the ancients contrived to compose the declamation, even that of comedies, when we come to reflect that in their music the progressions were made by lesser intervals than the very smallest that are now in use. With regard to the manner of writing this declamation we have observed

<sup>a</sup> *Itaque in iis quæ ad scenam componuntur fabulis, artifices pronuntiandi, &c.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 11. cap. 3.

already in the fourth chapter of this volume, that in all probability it was marked with the characters of the accents. The art of writing modulations of all kinds in notes, was very ancient at Rome, even in Cicero's time; having been known there long before the theatres were established. Cicero, after mentioning the use the Pythagoreans made, in some measure, of music in their regimen; and after observing that Numa the second king of the Romans had borrowed of the Pythagorean school several customs which he introduced into his little territories; cites <sup>a</sup> as a proof of what he had advanced, the practice of singing at table the praises of great men, in concert with wind-instruments. This shews, continues our author, that the art of noting the tones of songs and the declamation of verses, was known in those times. We have explained already what the Romans understood by the word *Carmen*. The same author says in another place <sup>b</sup>, speaking of the pleasures that are left to those who have had the misfortune of losing their hearing, that if they are fond of fine songs, perhaps they will have more pleasure in reading them, than they could

<sup>a</sup> *Morem apud majores tunc epularum fuisse, ut deinceps qui accubarent, canerent ad tibiam clarorum virorum laudes atque virtutes; ex quo perspicuum est cantus tunc fuisse descriptos vocum sonis, & carmina; quanquam id quidem etiam duodecim tabulæ declarant, condi jam tum solitum esse carmen.* Cic. Quæst. Tusc. l. 4.

<sup>b</sup> *Et si cantus eos forte delectant, majorem percipi posse legendis his quàm audiendis voluptatem.* Cic. Quæst. Tusc. l. 5.



enjoy in hearing them sung. Cicero supposes here, that generally speaking every body knew enough to be able to read a part of those songs, and that they were consequently written most of them with accents.

But I shall give here a passage from Livy the historian, which alone is sufficient to evince, that the ancients composed and noted the declamation of their theatrical pieces, and that it was accompanied in the execution with wind-instruments. This author in his seventh book makes a short dissertation on the origin and history of the theatrical representations at Rome. After observing that in the year *U. C.* 390, the city was afflicted with a pestilence, and that in order to make it cease, they celebrated those shows which consisted in the representation of theatrical pieces, he adds what follows: *These representations were then a new entertainment at Rome, the people having been used only to the spectacles of the Circus. Wherefore they were obliged to send for comedians from Tuscany, who acted on our stage according to the manner of their own country, that is, adapting their gestures to the wind-instruments, and reciting verses which*

*a Ludi quoque scenici nova res bellicoso populo (nam Circi modò spectaculum fuerat) inter alia cælestis iræ placamina instituti dicuntur. Cæterum parva quoque, ut principia ferme omnia, & ea ipsa peregrina res fuit; sine carmine ullo, sine imitandorum carminum actu, ludiones ex Etruria acciti, ad tibicinis modos saltantes, haud indecoros motus more Tusco dabant. Imitari deinde eos juventus, simul inconditis inter se jocularia fundentes versibus,*

that had not yet any composed declamation, to which our comedians were obliged to accommodate their action. But the art of theatrical representations, which our youth grew vastly fond of, was soon brought to perfection. At first they recited extempore verses, but soon after they learnt to write regular pieces; and as early as the time of Andronicus, the recitation of some of those pieces was already measured and noted for the convenience of the musicians; and the action regulated in like manner. I have inquired of several musicians, whether it would be difficult to invent characters, by which one might note the declamation used on our stage; for we have not accents enough to write our notes in the manner practised by the ancients. These gentlemen have answered me that the thing was possible, and that the declamation might be noted even with the Gamut of our music, provided we give the notes only one half of the ordinary intonation. For example, the notes which have a semi-tone of intonation in music, should have but a quarter-tone in declamation. Wherefore we should note the very least depressions and elevations of the voice, that are sensible at least to our ears.

*versibus, cæpere: nec absoni a voce motus erant . . . . . Nomen histriõibus inditum, qui non sicut ante Fescennino versu similem, incompõsitum temerè ac rudem alternis jaciebant, sed impletas modis satyras, descripto jam ad tibicinem cantu, motuque congruenti peragebant.* Liv. hist. dec. 1. 1. 7.

Our verses do not carry their measure with them, like the metrical verses of the Greeks and Romans. But I have been also informed, that we could not give the notes in declamation more than the half of their ordinary value. Thus we should give a minim only the value of a crotchet, and a crotchet the value of a quaver; and the other notes should be valued according to this proportion, in the same manner as would be practised in the intonation.

I am very sensible that it would not be easy to find people capable at first of reading currently this kind of music, and of intoning properly the notes. But if children at fifteen were taught this intonation for the space of six months, they would learn it in that time; for their organs would become pliant to this intonation, or pronunciation of notes without singing, as they bend to the intonation of the notes of our common music. Exercise and habit are, with respect to the voice, what the bow and the musician's hand are in relation to the violin. I do not even see how this intonation could be supposed to be difficult; for all that is to be done, is to accustom the voice to do methodically what it practises every day in conversation. Here we speak sometimes quick, and sometimes slow: we use all sorts of tones; and make the progressions, whether in raising or depressing the voice, by all kinds of possible intervals. The noted declamation would be nothing else but the tones and movements of the pronunciation written in notes. 'Tis certain that the difficulty

difficulty which would occur in the execution of such a note, would not be near so great as that which we meet with sometimes in reading words we never read before, and in singing at the same time and accompanying these words with the harpsichord in a note which we never studied before. And yet even women learn by practice to perform these three operations at the same time.

With regard to the manner of writing the declamation in notes, whether that which we have here pointed out, or any other that may hereafter be invented; there can be no such difficulty in digesting it into certain rules, and reducing the method of it to practice, as to find out the art of noting the steps and figures of a balet danced by eight people, especially considering the steps are so varied, and the figures so interwoven in our days. And yet Feuillée has contrived to find out this art; and his notes even instruct the dancers, in what attitude they are to hold their arms. 'Tis observable also, that tho' his Choregraphy was not published 'till the year 1706, yet the artists, as well in France, as in foreign countries, know already how to read it currently.





## C H A P. X.

*Continuation of the proofs which shew that the ancients wrote their declamation in notes.*

*Changes that happened towards Augustus's time in the Roman declamation.*

*Comparison between these changes and that which happened in our music and dance under Lewis XIV.*

LET us return now to the proofs drawn from facts, which shew that the ancients wrote the declamation of their theatrical pieces with notes. This sort of proof has quite another weight from that of an argumentation founded on mere possibilities.

As often as Cicero mentions the declamation of dramatic verses, he speaks of it in a quite different manner from our way of speaking of the declamation of Corneille's verses, which is an arbitrary thing. He mentions the declamation of dramatic verses as a regular melody, in conformity to which those verses were always pronounced : He speaks of it as of a beauty inherent, in a manner, in the verses he cites, like that which resulted from the sense they included, and from the choice of the words of which they were composed. After having produced

duced some verses of a tragedy, he says: *Excellent verses! where the sentiments, the expression, the modulation, and every thing, in fine, breathes grief and concern.* 'Tis thus we should commend a recitative of one of Lulli's operas.

The same author, in several parts of his works, speaks of the theatrical pieces of Livius Andronicus, Ennius, and Nævius, three poets who lived about two hundred years before him, as of a composed declamation when they brought their pieces upon the stage, and which was still used at the time he wrote. Now if this declamation had not been written with notes, would it have been possible to have preserved it so long? I leave the reader to judge whether I have made any change in Cicero's meaning. *We have seen,* says he, *instead of the plain and grave music of Nævius and Livius Andronicus's plays, a wild kind of music introduced upon the stage; insomuch that the actors, in order to follow the measure, are obliged to toss themselves to and fro, to roll their eyes and use contorsions of their head, and in short, to throw themselves into agitations not unlike to those of frantic people.* 'Tis thus our author delivers himself on this subject, after observing that Plato is not altogether to blame, for affirming

*a Præclarum carmen, est enim rebus, verbis, & modis lugubre.* Cic. Quest. Tusc. lib. 5.

*b Ego nec tam valde id timendum, nec planè contemnendum puto. Illa quidem musica, quæ solebat quondam completi severitatem jucundam Livianis & Nævianis modis, nunc videtis ut eadem exultent, cervices oculosque pariter cum modorum flexionibus torqueant.* Cic. de Leg. lib. 2.

that 'tis impossible to change the music of a country, without making some sensible alteration in the manners of the inhabitants. We have already observed that the gesture of the ancient comedians was as much subject to measure as the very recitation it self.

They began therefore in Cicero's time to change the theatrical declamation. A hundred years after this great orator, Quintilian found this declamation so full already of effeminate and lascivious tones, that after shewing the necessity of teaching children music, he adds, *that he does not intend they should learn the taste of music which prevailed in his time upon the stage; whose modulations are mixt with so much impudence and wantonness, that we may justly charge them with having contributed to extinguish the poor remains of manly courage we had yet amongst us.* All the ancients were persuaded that the character of music which prevailed most in particular countries, had a great influence on the manners of the inhabitants. Shall we presume to condemn so general an opinion relating to matters of fact, which happened daily in presence of those who committed them to writing; we that have only an imperfect knowledge of the music of the ancients? I should appeal in that case to philosophy, a science to which our age seems so particularly addicted. We may even observe at present in places where the inhabitants are of

*a Non hanc a me præcipi, quæ nunc in scenis effæminata & impudicis modis fracta, non ex parte minima, si quid in nobis virilis roboris manebat, excidit.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 1. cap. 10.

different

different religions, that they do not break up from divine service in the same humor. This transient effect of their public worship becomes sometimes a habit. In some countries the sovereign has been obliged to excite the people, when turned protestants, by public acts, to the same diversions on Sundays after the Divine service, as they used to take without any encouragement or excitement before they had changed their religious worship. But let us quit a subject which would soon grow too serious, and return to our point.

Those who are acquainted only with the French theatres, will not conceive so readily the whole meaning of the above cited passage of Quintilian. Tho' we have had some loose and irregular pieces, yet the actors have always observed a great decorum, as well with respect to the tones, as the gestures. But there are foreign theatres, where the players fall every day into the vice which Quintilian censures, by imitating all the tones and accents, (not to mention other particulars,) which passionate people are apt to fall into, when they find themselves at full liberty.

By reading Horace's art of poetry we find that the defect with which Quintilian reproaches the theatrical declamation of his time, was owing to their having attempted to render it livelier, softer, and more expressive, as well with respect to the recitation as the gesture, than it had been in former times. As Horace wrote after Cicero and before Quintilian, it will be therefore not unworthy of our curiosity to examine what he says in



relation to the changes which happened in the theatrical declamation, and to the difference there was between the new and old manner of reciting.

“ In former times, says Horace, they did not  
 “ make use of flutes of as large a size as our  
 “ trumpets, and which they must have tied with  
 “ a brass wire; either in accompanying or sup-  
 “ porting the chorus. They used none but the  
 “ very simplest wind-instruments at the theatre,  
 “ instruments whose extent was very limited, be-  
 “ cause they were perforated only with a small  
 “ number of holes.”

*Tibia non, ut nunc, orichalco vincla, tubæque:  
 Æmula, sed tenuis simplexque, foramine pauco,  
 Aspirare, & adesse choris erat utilis.*

HOR. de arte poet.

*The pipe of old was not as large as now,  
 Nor gather'd all the breath a man could blow :  
 It's hollow, small, and fill'd with feeble wind,  
 It cheer'd the audience, with the chorus join'd,  
 Not made of brass, nor like the trumpet loud,  
 With pleasing airs it fill'd the little crowd.*

CREECH.

“ But, continues Horace, the thing is now very  
 “ much altered. In the first place, the move-  
 “ ment has been accelerated, and in order to re-  
 “ gulate it, they employ measures that were not  
 “ formerly used, which has stript the recitation  
 “ of its ancient gravity.”

*Accessit*

*Accessit numerisque modisque licentia major.*

Id. *ibid.*

*The modish luxury spread o'er the plays.*

CREECH.

“ They have likewise given, adds Horace, a  
 “ greater extent to the instruments than they  
 “ had before. The tones in which we de-  
 “ claim, having been also multiplied, there is a  
 “ greater variety of sounds in the recitation,  
 “ than was formerly permitted. The actors are  
 “ obliged to draw a great many sounds from their  
 “ lungs which were not before required, if they  
 “ intend to follow these new instruments, whose  
 “ strings condemn them with severity, when they  
 “ happen to fail. In fact, the faults of those  
 “ who executed the declamation must have been  
 “ more sensible, in proportion as the declamation  
 “ had a greater resemblance to singing.”

I beg to be allowed, in clearing up this passage of Horace, to make use of a comparison drawn from the Church Music. St Ambrose would not admit into that Chant or kind of singing which to this day is called Ambrosian, more than four modes, denominated *Authentic*. This kind of song was certainly graver than the others, but had less beauty and expression. Out of fifteen strings, or fifteen principal notes contained in the system of harmonic music, there were four tones, namely, the highest and the three lowest, which were not received in the Ambrosian song. When St Ambrose composed it, the theatres were yet open, where they recited in the same language as people  
 1 sung

fung in churches. This Saint, in all probability, was unwilling the faithful should hear in church the usual tones of the theatre. St Gregory, who settled what is called the Gregorean song, about fifty years after the theatres were shut, employed eight modes, adding those called *Plagal*, to the four which were made use of by St Ambrose. Thus the fifteen strings of the ancient music were taken into the Gregorean song; and every body was so thoroughly convinced that this surpassed in beauty the Ambrosian, that so early as our Kings of the second race, the churches of Gaul quitted the Ambrosian song for the Gregorean.

But to return to Horace, he says: “ the actors  
 “ found themselves under an obligation at the  
 “ same time of precipitating their gesture, and  
 “ hurrying their pronounciation, because the move-  
 “ ment had been accelerated; for which reason  
 “ their precipitate declamation seemed to be quite  
 “ a new manner of reciting. In fine, the musi-  
 “ cian who was obliged to give such difficult  
 “ tones, found it necessary to pass frequently from  
 “ one part of the stage to the other, that his tones  
 “ might be heard the better by the actors, by  
 “ drawing nearer to them. Thus our theatrical  
 “ declamation is become so lively and passionate,  
 “ that a player who ought to recite more sedate-  
 “ ly, than a person who discourses rationally up-  
 “ on futurity, pronounces the sagest maxims  
 “ with as much agitation, as the priestess of Del-  
 “ phos could have shewn, when she uttered her  
 “ oracles sitting upon the tripod.”



*Sic priscae motumque & luxuriam addidit arti  
 Tibicen, traxitque vagus per pulpita vestem :  
 Sic etiam fidibus voces crevere severis,  
 Et tulit eloquium insolitum facundia praeceptis :  
 Utiliumque sagax rerum & divina futuri  
 Sortilegis non discrepuit sententia Delphis.*

HOR. de arte poet.

*Hence did our music, and our songs increase,  
 Our dance was artful, noble was our dress :  
 Our harps improv'd, and lofty eloquence,  
 In high strong lines convey'd unusual sense :  
 And pithy sentences short truth fore-shew'd,  
 As clear and useful as the Delphian God.*

CREECH

The precipitate gesticulation of those actors must have appeared like convulsive motions to such as were accustomed to a smoother and slower recitation. Thus the action of an Italian player would seem like the declamation of a frantic person, to those who had never seen a play acted but by English comedians. The new manner therefore of reciting must have appeared very extraordinary to the Romans in the beginning ; but they accustomed themselves to it gradually, because people are easily reconciled to such novelties as throw more soul and action into theatrical representations.

There are very good reasons to induce us to believe, that the first cause of the alteration which happened in the theatrical declamation in Cicero's time,



time, was that the Romans, who for a century and upwards had carried on a great correspondence with Greece, where they used to send even their children to study the arts and sciences, had changed their manner of pronouncing. The theatre therefore could only be said to have imitated the public, and copied its original.

Cicero himself informs us of the difference between the pronunciation of the Romans of his time and that of their ancestors. It began to be overloaded with accents, aspirations, and *ports de voix* borrowed from the pronunciation of foreigners. This is what he calls a new fashion imported from abroad ; *peregrinam insolentiam*. Let us judge, says this author <sup>a</sup> by the mouth of Crassus, of the ancient pronunciation by the manner in which some women pronounce even in our times. As women are less conversant with the world than men, they are also less subject to make any alteration in the pronunciation they imbibed from their infancy. When I hear, continues Crassus, my mother-in-law Lælia, methinks I am listening to the recitation of Plautus and Nævius's pieces ; for she pronounces smooth and even, without any emphasis, or affecting the accents or inflexions used in foreign languages. Have not I reason to believe that Lælia's father

<sup>a</sup> Equidem cum audio socrum meam LÆLIAM, facilius enim mulieres incorruptam antiquitatem conservant, quod multorum sermonis expertes tenent semper quæ prima didicerunt ; sed eam sic audio ut Plautum mihi ac Nævium videar audire, sono ipso vocis ita recto & simplici, ut nihil ostentationis aut imitationis asferre videatur, ex quo sic locutum ejus patrem judico. Cic. de orat. lib. 3.

*pronounced in the same manner as his daughter?* We have already quoted this passage, to shew that the declamation of the stage was not what is properly called singing, since it was so very like the pronounciation used in ordinary conversation. Nations may alter their pronounciation, as they may change their language. During the reign of Henry IV. the tone and accent of the Gascoons was introduced into the court of France; but this fashion was laid aside after the death of that Prince, who loved the Gascoons, and preferred them to the rest of his subjects, because he was born and bred in their province.

'Tis almost impossible but the gesture of people, whose language has acquired a more lively and more accented pronounciation, will be also more frequent and lively: this being a necessary consequence of the organization of the body. *Our gesture*, says Quintilian, <sup>a</sup> *is hurried by the very quickness of our discourse.* In fact this author, after commending the precepts which Cicero gives in relation to the gesture of an orator, adds, <sup>b</sup> *we are accustomed at present to see a more animated gesture; and we seem even to require this violent action of our orators.*

Pliny the younger, who had been one of Quintilian's disciples, writes <sup>c</sup> to a friend of his,

<sup>a</sup> *Gestus cum ipsa orationis celeritate crebrescit.* QUINT. Inst. l. 12. c. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Sed jam recepta est actio paullo agitatior, etiam et exigitur.* Id. ibid.

<sup>c</sup> *Pudet referre quæ & quam fracta pronounciatione dicantur.* PLIN. ep. 14. l. 12.

that

that he is ashamed to tell him what he had heard some orators recite, or to entertain him with the effeminate squeakings with which their declamation was filled: A declamation which we endeavour to render too expressive, must fall into one of these two opposite vices: either it will be too violent and full of excessive *ports de voix*; or it will be weak and effeminate. Wherefore Pliny charges this declamation with degenerating <sup>a</sup> into a down-right bawling. This author relates also, that Domitius Afer, a celebrated orator in the Roman history, and who began to plead about thirty years after the death of Cicero, called the new manner of declaiming, the downfall of eloquence. After having heard some young people plead, he said, *artificium hoc periit*; but perhaps his criticism carried with it too severe a censure. 'Tis certain however that this orator declaimed in an opposite taste to that which he has here censured, and *that his pronunciation was slow and grave*, as the same Pliny observes <sup>b</sup> when speaking of Afer. 'Tis not my intention in producing all these passages, to prove that the Romans were to blame for changing their manner of declaiming, but to shew that they actually changed it, and that this alteration commenced about the time of Cicero.

'Tis true however, that things were carried, in all probability, to excess in the beginning, as

<sup>a</sup> *Immodicum insolitumque clamorem.* Id. ib.

<sup>b</sup> *Cum apud centum viros diceret graviter & lentè, hoc enim illi actionis genus erat.* Id. ibid.

moderation is a very scarce virtue, and especially as the composers of declamation, as well as the players on the instruments, and the actors, must have vied with one another to excel with respect to the expression. This is what always happens in such novelties as are relished by the public: Some artists fall short of the limits prescribed by reason; while others leap beyond them, and give into all manner of extravagance and excess.

Our French music has within these fourscore years met with a fate not unlike to that of the Roman declamation in the time of Cicero. About a hundred and twenty years ago the songs composed in France were, generally speaking, nothing more than a series of long notes, and what our musicians sometimes *du gros Fa*. The movement of the execution was very slow; and neither the singers, nor the players on instruments were capable of executing a more difficult music. They did not even so much as think of composing others; perhaps there had been much better in former times, but that taste was vanished. Those who are best acquainted with music, and the history of ours in particular, whom I have constantly consulted before I committed any thing on this subject to paper, have assured me, that the state of our music was 120 years ago exactly as I have described it. Necessity had not even taught them as yet to measure it in writing: but the taste has since been altered, and the progression of our songs is accelerated to that degree,



degree, that sometimes they have neither grace nor expression.

This change has produced a still greater alteration in our dance, and especially in that of the stage. 'Tis now fourscore years since the movement of all the balet airs was quite slow, and their modulation, if I be permitted to make use of this expression, advanced sedately, even in its greatest gaiety.

These airs were executed with lutes, theorbos, and viols mixt with some violins; and the steps and figures of the balets composed to the airs here mentioned, were slow and simple. The dancers might observe all possible decency in the execution of these balets, the movements of which scarce differed from those of common dances.

Moliere had scarce shewn by two or three airs that it was possible to improve in this respect, when Lulli appeared, and began to compose what we call quick airs, adapted to the balets. As the dancers who executed these balets were obliged to move with greater celerity and action than had been hitherto practised, a great many people said that the right taste of dancing was corrupted, and that it was degenerating into a low vulgar entertainment. Even the very dancers found it difficult to enter into the spirit of those new airs, and Lulli himself was frequently obliged to compose the dances he had a mind to see executed pursuant to the airs here mentioned. Thus he was obliged to compose the steps and figures of the Chacone in Cadmus, because Beauchamps, who executed his balets at that time, did not relish the character of this air.

The

The success of these quick airs induced Lulli to compose such as should be both quick and characterised at the same time. We give the appellation of characterised to those airs whose harmony and rhythmus imitated the taste of a particular music, supposed to have been adopted by a certain people, or even by some fabulous personages of antiquity. The imagination therefore forms this idea of music, according to what is known of the character of those personages, to whom the musician gives airs of his own invention. 'Tis by the relation these airs have to this idea, (which tho' it be a vague one, is nevertheless the same pretty near in all people) that we judge of their fitness and agreement. As we have already observed, there is a probability or seeming truth even in this imaginary music. Tho' we never heard Pluto's music, yet we find a kind of probability in those airs, to which Lulli makes the retinue of the infernal Monarch dance in the fourth act of the opera of *Alceste*, because these airs breathe a tranquil and serious contentment, and as Lulli himself expressed it, *a veiled joy*. In effect, the characterised airs, with regard to the phantoms which our imagination has formed, are susceptible of all sorts of expressions in the same manner as other airs; being expressive indeed of the same thing, but in a particular taste and agreeably to the probability we have imagined.

As the ballet-composers whom Lulli employed, did not improve as quick as he, it frequently

happened that he found himself under a necessity of composing the balet for airs of a particular character. Six months before he died, he composed one for the air, to which he intended to make the Cyclops dance, who belonged to the retinue of Polyphemus <sup>a</sup>. But the dancers improved afterwards to such a degree that they have even outdone the musicians, to whom they have sometimes suggested the idea of airs of a new character, suitable to the balets of which these dancers had first conceived the idea. This emulation has been the occasion of introducing a variety and elegance into the balets and airs, which they never had before. About threescore years ago, the Fauns, Shepherds, Peasants, Cyclops, and Tritons danced pretty near in the same manner; but now the dance is divided into several characters. The artists, if I am not mistaken, reckon sixteen, and each of these characters has its proper steps, attitudes, and figures upon the stage. Even the very women have entered by degrees into these characters, and render them perceptible at present in their dance as well as men.

I do not deny but that our music and dance have been sometimes spoilt by endeavoring to enrich and render them more expressive. But this is the inevitable fate of all those arts which make a considerable progress. There are always a number of artists to be found who exceed their point, and disfigure their work by

<sup>a</sup> In the opera of GALATEA.

striving to imbellish it. Those who prefer the ancient dance alledge generally the excesses into which the present artists fall ; when they want to prove the depravity of the new taste. But, as the public is capable of discerning between the defects of the art and the faults of the artist, it does not condemn the new inventions, because of their being abused. Wherefore we are so well accustomed to the new theatrical dance, that we should find the taste extremely insipid, which prevailed about sixty years ago. Those who have seen our theatrical dance arrive gradually to its present perfection, are not so much surprized ; but foreigners who have been absent a long while from France, are vastly struck with this progress, which to them appears subitaneous. Having done now with this digression, which gives, methinks, a very clear explication of an important passage of Horace, that has been hitherto misunderstood, let us return to the theatrical declamation of the ancients. What I am going to say concerning the manner it was executed, is sufficient alone to prove all that I have hitherto advanced.





## C H A P. XI.

*The Romans frequently divided the theatrical declamation between two actors, one of whom pronounced, while the other executed the gesticulation.*

THE declamation of dramatic pieces was frequently divided between two actors; one of whom was obliged to pronounce, while the other performed the gesticulation. Now how would it have been possible for these two actors to perform in concert with one another, and to agree both of them with the accompaniment, unless the declamation had been concerted in such a manner that each of them knew precisely what his companion was to perform, and in what space of time he should execute it? Is this a thing that could have been settled without writing? Let us see what arguments can be offered in favor of our opinion. After Livy had given the history of the first theatrical representations at Rome, where he relates the manner of their progress, pursuant to what we have observed in the preceding chapter, he proceeds with the history of the Roman stage, and acquaints us with the adventure, which was the first occasion of dividing the declamation, as it were, into two employments; and he even gives us the reasons for which that custom was established.

Livius

“ Livius Andronicus, <sup>a</sup> a celebrated poet who  
 “ flourished about the year 514 of Rome, and  
 “ near fourscore years after the theatres had been  
 “ opened in that city, used to act in some  
 “ of his pieces. It was then a customary thing  
 “ for dramatic poets to appear themselves on  
 “ the stage in order to recite some part of their  
 “ works. The people who assumed the liberty,  
 “ *which they still preserve in France and Italy*, of  
 “ desiring those passages to be repeated which  
 “ pleased them most, by crying out so often the  
 “ latin word *Bis*, (which answers to our *encore*)  
 “ made poor Andronicus recite so long, that at last  
 “ he grew quite hoarse. Finding himself therefore  
 “ incapable of declaiming any longer, he made  
 “ the people consent to his having a slave to  
 “ recite the verses, whom he placed before the  
 “ musician; while he made the same gesticula-  
 “ tion as if he himself had been reciting. It  
 “ was then observed that his action grew more  
 “ lively and animated, because he exerted his  
 “ whole strength in gesticulating, while another  
 “ had the care and trouble of pronouncing. Hence  
 “ the practice arose, continues Livy, of dividing  
 “ the declamation between two actors, and to  
 “ recite, as it were, to the gesture and action

<sup>a</sup> LIVIUS, . . . . . *idem scilicet, quod omnes tunc erant, suo-  
 rum carminum actor, dicitur, cum sæpius revocatus vocem obtudisset,  
 veniâ petita puerum ad canendum ante tibicinem cum statuisset,  
 canticum egisse aliquanto magis vigenti motu, quia nihil vocis usus im-  
 pediebat. Inde ad manum cantari histrionibus ceptum, diverbiaque  
 tantum ipsorum voci relicta.* TIT. LIV. hist. lib. 7.

“ of the comedian ; and this custom has so far  
 “ prevailed, that the comedians pronounce no-  
 “ thing at present but the verses of the dialogues.”

It would be unnecessary, methinks, to shew here of what weight Livy's authority is in the present dispute ; and that all the argumentations imaginable are incapable of counterbalancing his deposition : This is a truth, I fancy, which no body will so much as question.

This passage of Livy stands in need of no other commentary, but of an authentic explication of the latin words *Canticum* and *Diverbium* ; which we find in Diomedes. This ancient grammarian, after observing that the theatrical pieces were composed of the chorus, dialogue, and monologue, adds : <sup>a</sup> *The Dialogues are those parts of a play in which several persons converse together. The Cantica or Monologues are parts where an actor speaks by himself, or in which, supposing there is a second actor upon the stage, this second actor does not converse with the first ; insomuch that if he says any thing, he says it, as it were, aside ; that is, without addressing his discourse to the other.* 'Tis observable that those passages of a dramatic piece which the ancients called *Cantica*, are generally the most

<sup>a</sup> *Membra Comædiarum tria sunt, Diverbium, Canticum, & Chorus. Diverbia sunt partes comædiarum in quibus diversorum personæ versantur. In Canticis autem una tantum debet esse persona, aut si duæ fuerint, ita debent esse ut ex occulto una audiat & eloquatur, sed secum, si opus fuerit, verba faciat. Diom. de arte Gram. l. 3. c. 4.*

moving, because the actor who thinks himself at full liberty, gives a swing to his most impetuous and secret sentiments, which he checks or disguises in the other scenes.

We may form some idea of the singing or harmonious declamation of those *Cantica* by what Quintilian says of them, tho' he mentions them only occasionally. This orator, speaking of a passage of Cicero's oration in defence of Milo, which ought to be pronounced with an emphasis, says, <sup>a</sup> that it has something in it of the nature of a *Canticum*. *We see*, continues Quintilian, *'tis impossible to recite it without throwing our heads somewhat back, as we are generally inclined to do by a mechanical instinct, when we want to pronounce a thing with emphasis: the voice flows with greater ease, when we hold our heads in that posture.* The same author says <sup>b</sup> in another place (which we have already cited, when we endeavored to prove that the declamation of the ancients was not a musical modulation,) " that a child must read the poets in  
" a different manner from what he would read  
" prose; but still he must take care his voice  
" does not slip from him, as if he were recit-  
" ing a *Canticum* upon the stage."

<sup>a</sup> *Plenior tamen hæc canali fluunt: Vos Albani tumuli atque luci, &c. nam Cantici quiddam habent, sensumque resupina sunt.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 11. cap. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Sit autem lectio virilis & cum suavitate quadam gravis, non quidem prosæ similis, quia carmen est & poetæ canere se testantur; non tamen in canticum dissoluta.* QUINT. ib. l. 1. c. 10.



As Livy relates the origin of a custom which was practised in his days, I should not have thought of confirming his recital by the testimony of other authors, if the thing itself did not appear very extraordinary. For which reason, it will not be amiss, methinks, to produce some more passages of ancient authors, who affirm the same thing as this historian.

Valerius Maximus, who wrote under Tiberius, relates the adventure of Andronicus in the same terms almost as Livy. He says <sup>a</sup>, when speaking of this poet; *Andronicus acting one of his tragedies, was obliged by the spectators to repeat a particular passage so often, that his voice grew hoarse; upon which he was under a necessity of making use of a slave to recite his verses in concert with the flute, while he himself executed the gesticulation.*

Lucian in a treatise on the dancing of the ancients, says <sup>b</sup> of the tragic personages, that they pronounce now and then some Iambic verses, and in so doing their only attention is to unfold properly the organs of the voice, for the artists or poets who brought the pieces upon the stage, took care of the rest. A few lines after he adds: *In former times the same persons recited and gesticulated, but as the action obstructed the liberty of breathing, and troubled the pronunciation,*

<sup>a</sup> *Is sui operis actor, cum sapius à populo revocatus vocem obtudisset, adhibito pueri & tibicinis concentu gesticulationem tacitus peregit.* VALER. MAX. lib. 2. cap. 4.

<sup>b</sup> LUCIAN. de orchesi.

*the public have allowed those who gesticulate to employ singers who pronounce in their stead. Aulus Gellius, a cotemporary of Lucian, says, <sup>a</sup> that the singers who recited in his time without moving, performed also the gesticulation when they recited at the ancient theatres.*

All these recitals are further corroborated by the testimony of Donatus, who wrote professedly on the stage. *The Comedians themselves, says he <sup>b</sup>, in relation to Terence's plays, pronounced the dialogues; but the modulation of the Cantica was regulated, not by the poet, but by a skilful musician.*

In fine, Isidorus of Seville, who might at least have seen those who had been present at the theatrical representations of the Romans, mentions this division of the declamation between two actors. He says in relation to one of the parts of the theatre, <sup>c</sup> *that the poets and those who sung tragedies or comedies, placed themselves there in order to recite, while the other actors executed the gestures.* We find by the history of Livius Andronicus, as related by Livy, and by several other passages of ancient authors, that the poets frequently sung part of their plays, that is, they themselves recited those passages which the

<sup>a</sup> *Saltabundi autem canebant, quæ nunc stantes canunt. AULUS GELLIUS, lib. 26. cap. 2.*

<sup>b</sup> *Diverbia histriones pronunciabant; Cantica vero temperabantur modis, non à poeta, sed à perito artis musices factis. DONAT. fragm. de trag. & comœd.*

<sup>c</sup> *Ibi enim poetæ, comœdi & tragœdi, ad certamen conscendebant, iisque canentibus, alii gestus edebant. ISID. Orig. lib. 18. cap. 44.*

gesticulators did not pronounce. Four verses of an epigram from the latin Anthology, give us a very good description of an actor, whose gesticulation agrees with what the other actors recite, after the chorus has done speaking.

*Ingressus scenam populum saltator adorat,  
Solerti spondens prodere verba manu.  
Nam cum grata chorus diffudit cantica, dulcis  
Quæ resonat cantor, motibus ipse probat.*

We shall give hereafter the reasons why we have translated *Saltator* by the word *actor*.

'Tis proper to remind the reader of three things. The first, that the ancient theatres were a great deal bigger than ours, and not so well illuminated. As the plays of the ancients were acted by day, their scenes, pursuant to what I shall presently observe; could not have so distinct a light as that which our theatrical illuminations throw upon the stage. Wherefore the ancients did not see their actors so near and so distinctly as we do ours. The second is, that the ancient actors were masked, and consequently people could not see by the motions of their mouth, or the muscles of their face, whether they spoke or not. The spectator was not therefore sensible of the ridiculous absurdity we imagine to ourselves at first in the behaviour of two persons, one of whom was to gesticulate without speaking, while the other with his arms a-cross recited in a pathetic tone. Thirdly, as the masks of the comedians

comedians were of use in augmenting the strength of the voice; (which we shall prove hereafter) they must have produced such an alteration, as to render it difficult to know, for example, whether the voice which Mitio in the *Adelphi* had in the *Canticum*, was the same as he had in the Dialogues. 'Tis highly probable, they used to chuse a *singer*, whose voice was as like, as possible, to that of the comedian; and we may reasonably suppose that it was no longer possible to distinguish the two voices, when they had passed thro' the masks. This singer placed himself in a kind of alcove, <sup>a</sup> towards the bottom of the stage.

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## C H A P. XII.

*Of the masks of the ancient comedians.*

HERE I think myself in some manner obliged to make a kind of digression concerning the masks in use among the Greek and Roman comedians; as it will contribute to illustrate what I have still to say with respect to the division of the declamation between the *Gesticulator* and the *Singer*. This practice was first introduced into Greece by Æschilus: but Diomedes tells us, <sup>b</sup> that it was one Roscius Gal-

<sup>a</sup> ISIDOR. orig. lib. 18.

<sup>b</sup> *Personis verò uti primus cepit Roscius Gallus præcipuus Histrio, quòd oculis obversis erat, nec satis decorus in personis, nisi parasitos pronuntiabat.* DIOMED. lib. 3.



lus, who first wore a mask on the Roman stage, to conceal the defect of his squinting; tho' he does not let us know when this Roscius lived. This custom has been preserved in part on some modern stages; for a great many personages of the Italian comedy are masked. Tho' we have never obliged our actors to imitate this practice of the ancients, yet it is not a long while since masks were frequently used on the French stage in the representation of comedies. They have been also used even in tragic representations; and tho' they have been since banished from thence, yet they are not intirely expelled our comedies. The ancient players were all masked when they acted, and each kind of dramatic poetry had its particular mask. In a treatise written by Lucian, and intituled the *Gymnasium*, which is by way of dialogue between Solon and Anacharsis the Scythian, the latter says to Solon, who had been speaking to him of the utility of tragedies and comedies, *I have seen some of them at the Bacchanalian entertainments. In tragedy, the actors are mounted on a kind of stilts, and wear masks, the mouths of which gape enormously wide. The words that are uttered from them with a great noise, are grave and sententious. In comedy, the actors, who are shod and dressed as people in common life, do not bawl out so loud, but their masks are much more ridiculous than those of the former.*

True it is, that by means of those masks, the actor appeared as conformable as he pleased to the

the character he assumed. The ancient players, as well in tragedy as comedy, had several sorts of masks which they frequently changed. For the people belonging to the stage were of opinion in those times that a particular physiognomy was so very essential to the character of a personage, as to think it necessary to give the figure of the mask proper for the representation, in order to communicate a complete knowledge of the character of this personage. After the description therefore of each personage, such as they used to prefix to their theatrical pieces under the title of *Dramatis personæ*, it was customary for them to give the figure of the mask; which appeared to them a necessary instruction.

In effect, those masks represented not only the face, but likewise the head intire, whether narrow or broad, bald or covered with hair, round or pointed; tho' the late Monsieur Perrault was of a contrary opinion. This writer was a person of such honor and probity, and withal so much a gentleman, that I am persuaded he would not be angry with me, for the remark I am going to make. The veneration I preserve for his memory, induces me even to fancy, he would have corrected his mistake, had he been apprized of it.

*Major in personis observatio est apud cômicos tragicosque, multis enim utuntur & variis.* QUINT. in Proëm. lib. II.

Every

Every one knows the fable of Phædrus, <sup>a</sup> in which a fox, after having examined a tragic mask, cries out: *What a fine countenance without any brains!*

*Quanta species, inquit, cerebrum non habet!* Upon which M. Perrault writes the following criticism. <sup>b</sup> *We find in Æsop it was an ape, who meeting with a head in a sculptor's shop, says, Behold what a fine head! 'tis a pity it has no brains. The thing goes very well in the manner Æsop has related it, because a head is made to have brains; but there is no wit at all in applying it to a mask or vizard which are not made to have brains, and cannot consequently be reproached for having none. Now I would fain know whether there can be any taste in altering a fable after this manner? But the masks of which Phædrus makes mention, were exactly in the same case as Æsop's head; for they covered the intire head of the actor, and therefore seemed made for brains. This may be seen only by opening the ancient manuscript of Terence in the King's Library, or even the Terence published by Madam Dacier.*

The use therefore of masks prevented people from seeing an actor advanced in years, play the part of a young lover. Hippolytus, Hercules, and Nestor appeared always upon the stage, with their heads distinguishable by being suited to their known character. The vizard under which the actor appeared was always agre-

<sup>a</sup> Phædr. fab. 7. lib. 7.    <sup>b</sup> Parallels. tom. 3. p. 307.



able to his character, and there was no such thing to be seen, as a player acting the part of a man of honor with the physiognomy of an accomplished villain. *When the composers of declamation, says Quintilian, <sup>a</sup> introduce a piece upon the stage, they know how to draw the pathetic even from the very masks. In tragedies, Niobe appears with a sorrowful countenance; and Medea announces her character by the fierce air of her physiognomy. Strength and valor are painted on Hercules's mask; while that of Ajax proclaims his transport and fury. In comedies, the masks of slaves, pimps, parasites, peasants, soldiers, old women, courtezans, and she-slaves, have each their particular character. By the masks, we distinguish the cross old fellow from the good-natur'd old gentleman; the sober youth from the debauched rake; and the young damsel from the lady of quality. If the father who acts the principal character of the comedy, is to be sometimes pleased and sometimes vexed, he must have one of the brows of his mask knit*

<sup>a</sup> Itaque in iis quæ ad scenam componuntur fabulis, artifices pronuntiandi à personis quoque affectus mutuuntur, ut sit Niobe in tragœdia tristis, atrox Medæa, attonitus Ajax, truculentus Hercules. In comœdiis verò præter aliam observationem quâ servi, lenones, parasites, rustici, milites, vetulæ, meretriculæ, ancillæ, senes austeri ac mites, juvenes severi ac luxuriosi, matronæ, puellæ inter se discernuntur; pater ille, cujus præcipuè partes sunt, quia interim concitatus, interim lenis est, altero erecto, altero composito est supercilio. Atque id ostendere maxime Latinis actoribus moris est, quod cum iis quas agunt partibus congruat. QUINT. Inst. l. 11. c. 3.



*and the other smooth ; and he has a particular attention to shew that side of his mask to his spectators, which agrees with his present character.* 'Tis thus M. Boindin <sup>a</sup> explains the last lines of the passage of Quintilian, by supposing that the comedian who wore the mask turned himself sometimes one way and sometimes another, to shew always that side of his face which suited his present situation, when he acted parts where he was obliged to shew a change of passion, without being allowed to go behind the scenes to change his mask. For example, if this father was pleased upon the stage, he presented immediately that side of his mask which had a smooth brow ; and when his temper was altered, he walked on the stage, and managed so as to shew that side of the mask which had the knit brow, taking care in both situations to appear always in profile. *The Roman comedians*, continues Quintilian, *had a particular attention to this part of their art.* We meet with something in Julius Pollux, which seems to confirm this ingenious and judicious conjecture. This author <sup>a</sup> speaking of the characterised masks, says, that an old man's mask who acts the principal part in a comedy, ought to be sour and ruffled on one side, and pleasant and serene on the other. The same author says also in regard to the masks of tragedies which ought to be characterised, that the mask of Thamyris, that rash musician whom the muses deprived of his

<sup>a</sup> In an essay presented to the academy of Belles Lettres.

fight for having been so insolent as to challenge them, ought to have one eye blue and the other black.

The masks of the ancients produced likewise a great probability in those excellent plays, where the intricacy arises from the mistake by which some of the actors take one personage for another. The spectator who found himself mistaken upon attempting to distinguish between two actors, whose mask was as like as possible, might easily conceive that the actors themselves were deceived. Thus he was soon imposed upon by the supposition on which the incidents of the piece are founded; whereas this supposition is so very improbable with us, that 'tis with great difficulty we give way to it. In the representation of two pieces which Moliere and Renard have imitated from Plautus, we perceive distinctly that the personages who occasion the mistake are really different. How is it possible then to conceive, that the other actors who are nearer to them than we, should be mistaken in this respect? 'Tis owing therefore to the habit we have of humoring all the suppositions which custom has established on the stage, that we fall in with those which constitute the intricacy of the *Amphytrio* and the *Menæchmi*; and I should be far from advising any body to compose a new French comedy, the intrigue of which should consist in the like perplexity.

Besides the masks furnished the ancients with the opportunity of making men act those fe-

male personages, whose declamation required robust lungs than women generally have, especially when they were to make themselves heard in such spacious places as the Roman theatres. In fact, several passages of the ancients<sup>a</sup>, and among the rest a recital which Aulus Gellius gives of the adventure that happened to a comedian whose name was Polus, who acted the personage of Electra, inform us, that it was customary for the ancients to make men act female characters. This author therefore relates, that Polus acting at the theatre of Athens the part of Electra in the tragedy of Sophocles, mounted the stage with an urn in his hand, in which the real ashes of one of his children were deposited: This was in that part of the play where Electra appears holding an urn in her hand, in which she imagines the ashes of her brother Orestes are contained. As Polus was exceedingly moved when he addressed his speech to this urn, so of course he made a great impression upon the whole assembly. Juvenal railing against Nero, says, that they must lay masks, Thyrsus's, and in fine Antigona's gown, at the feet of this Emperor's statues, as a kind of trophy to preserve the memory of his great actions. This supposes evidently that Nero had acted the part of the sister of Etœocles and Polynices in some tragedy.

*Ante pedes Domiti longum tu pone Thyeste  
ibi Syrma, vel Antigona, & personam Menalippes.*

Juv. sat. 8.

<sup>a</sup> CICERO de offic. lib. 1. AULUS GELLIUS. lib. 7. cap. 5.

By thee Domitii's statues shall be laid,  
 The habit and the mask in which you play'd  
 Antigone's, or bold Thyeste's part,  
 (While your wild nature little wanted art.)

STEPNEY.

By means of those masks they introduced all sorts of foreign nations on the stage, with their own peculiar physiognomy. *The mask of a red-hair'd Batavian*, says Martial, *which raises your laughter, is a bugbear to children.*

————— *Rufi persona Batavi*  
*Quem tu derides; hæc timet ora puer.*

Those masks furnished even lovers with opportunities of paying a compliment to their mistresses. Suetonius informs us, <sup>a</sup> that when Nero mounted the stage in order to represent a God or a Hero, he wore a mask made after his own visage; but when he acted the part of some Goddess or Heroine, he then wore a mask which resembled the woman he actually loved.

Julius Pollux, <sup>b</sup> who composed his work for the emperor Commodus, assures us that in the ancient Greek comedy, which had assumed the liberty of characterising and acting living citi-

<sup>a</sup> *Heraum, Deorumque, item Heroidum personis effictis ad similitudinem oris sui & fœminæ, prout quamque diligeret,*  
 SUET. in NER.

<sup>b</sup> ONOMAST. lib. 4. c. 18.



zens, the actors wore a mask which resembled the person they represented in the play. Thus Socrates might have been seen on the Athenian stage an actor who wore a mask that was like him, when Aristophanes represented him under the name of Socrates, in the comedy of the *Clouds*. This same Pollux gives us, in the above-cited chapter, a very long and curious detail concerning the different characters of masks which were used in comic and tragic representations.

But on the other hand the masks deprived the spectators of the pleasure of seeing the passions rise, and of discerning their different symptoms on the countenance of the actor. All the expressions of the human passions affect us; but those marks which are painted on the visage, make a far greater impression, as Quintilian observes, than such as shew themselves only by the gesture and voice.

And yet the ancient comedians could not display the signs of the passions on the countenance, for they very seldom laid aside the mask, and even some comedians never put it off at all. 'Tis true indeed, we suffer our comedians to conceal one half of such marks of the passions as may be expressed on the countenance. These marks consist as much in the changes that happen in the color of the face, as in those which are made in the features. Now the red-paint with

<sup>b</sup> *Dominatur autem maximè vultus.* QUINT. lib. ii. cap. 3.

which it has been customary within these twenty years even for men to dawb themselves before they appear on the stage, hinders us from perceiving the changes of color, which make so great and natural an impression. But the masks of the ancient comedians concealed also the alteration of the features which the paint does not.

This indeed may be said in defence of the mask, that it does not conceal the eyes of the comedian from the spectator. Now if it be true that the passions are more discernible by the alterations which happen in our countenance, than by those which appear in our gesture, attitude, and tone of voice; 'tis likewise true that these passions are still more distinguishable by the changes that happen in our eyes, than by what appears in the others parts of the face. Our eyes <sup>a</sup> alone are capable of representing distinctly what passes in the countenance, and render it, if I may say so, intirely visible notwithstanding the mask. The imagination supplies what lies concealed; and when we behold the eye fired with rage, we imagine we see the rest of the countenance inflamed. Several passages of Cicero and Quintilian shew, that the ancient actors expressed perfectly all the signs of the passions by the motion of their eyes, assisted by the attitude and gestures. The same may be said of those

<sup>a</sup> *Animi est omnis actio, & imago animi vultus est, indices oculi.* Cic. de orat. lib. 3.

Italian comedians who use masks upon the stage. *The soul, as Quintilian observes, <sup>a</sup> is painted on the countenance; and the eyes are of all parts of the face, that which speaks to us, as it were, most intelligibly.*

I shall adhere nevertheless to the simplest opinion; for I really think it impossible for a masked actor to express so well as one who uses no mask, the greatest part of the passions, and especially those of the tender kind. The comedian who acts without a mask may employ all the methods of expressing the passions which the masked player uses, and he is capable also of shewing signs of the passions, which are not in the other's power. I fancy therefore that the ancients who had so great a relish for the representation of theatrical pieces, would have made their comedians lay aside their masks, were it not for one reason. This is, that as their theatres were very large and without a roof or solid covering, the mask was of great use to the comedian, inasmuch as it enabled him to make himself heard by all the spectators, whilst on the other hand it deprived the latter of no great advantage. In fact, it was impossible that the alterations of the countenance which the mask conceals, should be distinctly perceived by the spectators, a great number of whom were upwards of twelve fathoms distant from the comedian: Let us explain the reason, which I have here alledged.

<sup>a</sup> *In ipso vultu plurimum valent oculi per quos maxime animus emanat.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 11. cap. 3.

Gellius, who wrote under the emperor Adrian, commends <sup>a</sup> the etymology which Caius Bassus gave of the Latin word *persona*, which signifies a mask, by making this term come from the verb *personare*, which implies to resound. “ In fact, “ *says he*, the face and the whole head being “ inclosed under the cover of the mask, inso- “ much that the voice cannot make its way but “ by one narrow passage, it follows therefore “ that this constraint of the voice produces a “ stronger and clearer sound. Hence the La- “ tins have given the name of *persona* to masks, “ which render the voice of those who wear “ them more distinct and sonorous.” Whether Bassus was right or not in his etymology, is nothing at all to our purpose. ’Tis sufficient for us, that Gellius would neither have commended nor adopted it, had not masks in his days been a kind of echoes. Boetius confirms his opinion by saying, that the concavity of the mask augments the force of the voice.

No body can pretend to question, after having read these passages of Gellius, and Boetius, who

<sup>a</sup> *Lepide mehercules & scitè Caius Bassus in libris quos de origine vocabulorum composuit, unde appellata sit persona, interpretatur, à personando enim id vocabulum factum esse conjectat: nam caput, inquit, & os cooperimento personæ tectum undique, unaque tantum vocis emittendæ via pervium, quæ non vaga neque diffusa est, in unum tantummodo exitum collectam coactamque vocem, & magis claros sonorosque sonitus facit. Quoniam igitur indumentum illud oris clarescere & resonare vocem facit, ob eam causam persona dicta est. AUL. GELL. Noct. Att. lib. 5. cap. 7.*





alteration in the laughter of the actor, as to render it a very disagreeable noise. This author advising orators to examine well their natural talents, in order to imbibe a taste of declamation agreeable to those talents, says, it is possible to please with different qualities. He adds, that he has seen two famous comedians equally applauded, tho' their manner of declaiming was very different; but each had consulted his inclination and talents in that manner of acting, which he had pitched upon. Demetrius, one of those comedians, whom Juvenal ranks among the best of his time, and who had a very agreeable voice, chose for his part the personages of divinities, ladies of distinction, indulgent fathers, and fond lovers. Stratocles, the other comedian, who is mentioned also by Juvenal, <sup>a</sup> had a rough voice. He applied himself therefore intirely to act the character of austere fathers, parasites, roguish servants, and in short, of all those personages which require a great deal of action. His gesture was lively, his motions animated, and he ventured to do several things capable of drawing the hisses of the house upon any other actor but himself. One of those bold things which Stratocles ventured to do, was to laugh, tho' he was very sensible, says Quintilian, <sup>b</sup> *of the reasons why laughing produces a disagreeable effect in a mask.*

<sup>a</sup> Juv. sat. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Illum decuit cursus & agilitas, & vel parum conveniens personæ risus, quem non ignarus rationis populo dabat.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 11. cap. ult.

Laughter is not a disagreeable thing of itself in a comic scene: This we are very well convinced of; for Moliere makes his personages sometimes burst out into a repeated laughter. A great fit of laughing must have echoed therefore in such a manner in the mouth of the mask, as to produce a very disagreeable sound. This could not have happened, if the mouth and neighbouring parts of the inside of the mask had not been covered with a hard sonorous body, which made some alteration in the natural sound of the voice.

I shall venture to give here a conjecture intirely new, which may clear up a passage of Pliny that has been hitherto misunderstood: This is that the ancients, after having made use of brass to incrustate the masks, employed afterwards for the same purpose very thin plates of marble. Pliny, speaking of curious stones, says that the stone called calcophonos, or *brass-sounding*, is black, and that according to the etymology of its name, it produced, upon being touched, a sound like that of this metal. *Wherefore*, continues he, <sup>a</sup> *the comedians are advised to make use of it.* Now what use could the comedians have made of a stone with this property, were it not to incrustate a part of the mouth of their masks, after it had been sawed into very thin plates. Those masks which were of wood, as we learn from a poem of Prudentius against Symma-

<sup>a</sup> *Calcophonos nigra est, sed illisa æris tinnitum reddit, tragædis ut suadent gestanda.* PLIN. lib. 37. cap. 10.

thus, were very proper for receiving this incrustation. *Those who recite in tragedies, says our poet, cover their heads, with a wooden mask, and by the contrivance of the opening, they pour forth their turgid declamation.*

*Ut tragicus cantor ligno tegit ora cavato,  
Grande aliquid cujus per hiatum carmen anhelet.*

Solinus, who wrote some time after Pliny, seems to inform us of the reason why the use of this stone was preferable to brass in the inward incrustation of a part of the mask. 'Tis that in the repercussion of the voice it does not alter the clearness of the sound, whereas the resounding of the brass throws always some confusion into the sound it reverberates. After observing that the *brass-sounding* stone resounds like this metal, he adds, <sup>a</sup> that it does not obstruct the clearness of the voice, when it is used with discretion.

We are able to judge of the attention the ancients had to whatever they thought capable of adding either ornament or ease to the execution of their theatrical pieces, by what Vitruvius tells us <sup>b</sup> concerning the manner of placing the *Echæa*, or brazen vessels proper for the echoes. This author speaking of the architecture of the theatres, enters into a

<sup>a</sup> *Calcophonos resonat ut pulsata æra. Pudicè habitus servat vocis claritatem.* SOLIN. ed. SALMAS. C. 37.

<sup>b</sup> *Ita hac ratione vox à scena velut à centro profusa, se circum agens tacituquè feriens singulorum vasorum cava, excitaverit auctam claritatem & concentu convenientem sibi consonantiam.* VITRUV. lib. 5. cap. 5, &c.



very long and methodical detail in relation to the form of those vessels (which in all probability were nothing more than round concave plates of brass) as well as to the places where they were to be fixt, that the voice of the actor might have a clearer and more tunable echo. He tells us that all those vessels ought to be of different tones, whereby he plainly indicates that the opening and the other dimensions ought not to be the same; and as those vessels were placed at different distances from the actor, they must have been more or less easy to vibrate, in order to answer in concert. The same author complains that the Romans in his time neglected to place those *Echæa* in their theatres, in imitation of the Greeks, who were very exact in this point. Very likely the Romans followed afterwards Vitruvius's advice, for Pliny complains <sup>a</sup> that the vessels and vaults in which they were placed, absorbed the actor's voice. He pretends that they had as bad an effect as the sand of the orchestra, that is, of the space between the stage and the foremost row of the spectators. On the other hand Cassiodorus observes, <sup>b</sup> that the voice of those who acted in tragedies being strengthened by the concavities, produced such a sound

<sup>a</sup> *In theatrorum orchestris scrobe aut arena super injecta, vox derotatur & in rudi parietum circumjectu doliis etiam inaquibus.* PLIN. lib. 11. cap. 52.

<sup>b</sup> *Tragœdia ex vocis vastitate nominatur, quæ concavis repercussionibus roborata, talem sonum videtur efficere, ut pænè ab homine non credatur.* CASSIOD. ep. 51. lib. 1.

as one would scarce imagine could come from a human breast. Those concavities could be nothing else but the *Echæa* and the horn of the mask. We may judge by the attention the ancients had to these things, whether they neglected to search for every kind of invention, that might enable the theatrical masks to produce the effect, which, according to Gellius, had given them the name of *persona*.

If the ancient writers could have foreseen, that future generations would have been so much at a loss to explain things, which were so easy to them, by reason they saw them every day, or because every body had books that gave methodical accounts of them; they would have been more circumstantial in their narrations. But they imagined that posterity would be always in the way of being informed of the subject they spoke of; for which reason they seldom mentioned any more concerning it, than was necessary to support an argument, to ground a comparison, to explain a circumstance, or to give the reason of an etymology. Even those who have wrote methodically on poetry, architecture, and several other arts, judging it would be unnecessary to commence their reasonings and instructions with a previous description of what was visible to all the world, fall directly into precepts and discussions, which their cotemporaries found very clear, but are a kind of enigma to posterity, because the torch which gave light to their cotemporaries, is extinguished. For example, as the ancients have not left us a descrip-

tion of the inside of the *Coliseum*, architects are still in doubt concerning the nature of the inward distribution of the third floor, tho' the two first are yet almost intire. For the very same reason Antiquarians are at a loss how to explain a great many things in relation to the masks; which would not be the case perhaps, had we not lost the books that Dionysius of Halicarnassus, Rufus, and several other ancient writers wrote concerning the theatres and scenic representations. They would at least have instructed us in respect to several things that have escaped our knowledge, tho' they happened not to give us a thorough insight into every thing. The reader will find a catalogue of those writers whose books have perished, in the fourth chapter of the first part of a treatise concerning the theatres of the ancients, written by Boulanger the Jesuit.

But we know enough to conceive that the ancients found the masks of great use, by rendering the players capable of making themselves heard in theatres which had no solid covering, and where there were several spectators at twelve fathoms distance from the stage. Besides, as we have already observed, the masks deprived the spectators of no great advantage; for near two thirds of them were at too great a distance to perceive the effect of the passions on the countenance of the players, at least distinctly enough to behold them with pleasure. 'Tis impossible to distinguish these expressions at a particular distance in which one may be capable nevertheless

nevertheless of discerning the age and other remarkable strokes of the character of a mask. An expression must have been made with very frightful grimaces to be rendered discernible to the spectators at above five or six fathoms distance from the stage. I shall repeat here an observation I have made already in another place: 'Tis that the ancient players did not act like ours by the help of artificial lights, which illuminated the theatre on all sides, but by the assistance of day light, which must have left a great many shades upon the stage, as the light came in chiefly from the top. Now the justness and accuracy of declamation frequently requires the alteration of the strokes, in which an expression consists, to be hardly visible. This is what happens in particular circumstances, when the actor breaks out involuntarily into some external demonstration of his passion. We have therefore reason to make our players act without masks, and the ancients were not in the wrong to have theirs masked. But 'tis time to return to my subject.





## C H A P. XIII.

*Of Saltation or the art of gesticulation, called by some authors the hypocritical music.*

AS soon as a person is acquainted with the division of the declamation used in the ancient theatres, he meets with proofs of it in a great many books, where he took no notice of them before he had been instructed with regard to this practice. He understands very clearly, for example, the passage where Suetonius says, <sup>a</sup> “ that Caligula was so passionately fond of singing and dancing, that even in public spectacles he could not refrain from singing aloud with the actor who spoke, nor from making the same gesture as the actor who gesticulated, either in order to approve his gesture or to make some alteration in it.” ’Tis observable that Suetonius uses here the words *singing* and *pronouncing*, as synonymous terms in the language of the theatre, and that he employs in the same manner the word *dance* and that of *gesticulating*. This author by so doing has only given the name of the genus to the species. The ancient art of gesticulation, pursuant

<sup>a</sup> *Canendi ac saltandi voluptate ita efferebatur, ut ne publicis quidem spectaculis temperaret, quominus et tragædo pronuntianti concineret, & gestum histrionis quasi laudans vel corrigens, palam effingeret.* SUBT. IN CAIO CÆS.

to what we have already observed, was one of the species into which the art of dancing was divided. Our dancing is a species of the art which the Greeks called Ὀρχησις and the Romans, *Saltatio*. But as the French translators render these two words by that of dancing, this ambiguity has been the source of a great many false ideas. Let us see what discoveries we can make concerning this subject.

Plato says, <sup>a</sup> that the art by the Greeks called Ὀρχησις consists, in the imitation of all the gestures and motions of man. In fact, according to Varro, <sup>b</sup> the word *Saltatio* did not come from *Saltus*, which signifies *leaping*, but from the name of an Arcadian called *Salius*, who was the first that taught the Romans this art. The testimony of Varro cannot be balanced by any argument founded on the apparent etymology of the word *Saltatio*. Wherefore we must divest our selves of the prejudice drawn from the name of *Saltatio*, which might lead us to believe that every saltation derived its origin from the word *Saltus*, which signifies a *leap*.

'Tis easy to conceive that the artificial dances of the ancients, in which they imitated, for example, the leaps and gambols that peasants are accustomed to make after drinking, or the

<sup>a</sup> PLATO de legibus, lib. 7.

<sup>b</sup> *Saltatores autem nominatos Varro dicit ab Arcade Salio, qui primus docuit Romanos adolescentes nobiles saltare.* ISID. orig. lib. 18. cap. 50.

frantic caperings of Bacchanalians, were like to our dances. But the other dances of the ancients, in which they imitated the action of persons who do not leap, or who, to speak after our manner, do not dance, was only an imitation of the steps, attitudes, gestures, and in short of all the external demonstrations with which people are accustomed to accompany their discourse, or which they sometimes use in order to convey their sentiments without speech. 'Tis thus David danced before the ark, testifying by his attitude, as well as by his gestures and prostrations, the profound respect he had for the pledge of the covenant of the Lord with the Jewish people. We find by Dion,<sup>a</sup> that Heliogabalus *danced*, not only when he saw dramatic pieces acted from the place where it was customary for the emperor to be seated, but that he used also to dance as he walked, as well as in giving audience, in speaking to his soldiers, and even when he sacrificed. As odd and as crazy a prince as Heliogabalus was, yet he could not be supposed to dance after our manner in those circumstances which Dion relates. 'Tis therefore fit we should form an idea of the *Saltatio*, as of an art which included not only our dancing, but moreover the various rules of gesture. This is what I shall still endeavour to prove by the following authorities.

<sup>a</sup> DION. edit. Flac. p. 90.

Athenæus writes, <sup>a</sup> that Thelestes was the first inventor of that kind of dumb play, or dancing, without leaps or capers, which we shall hereafter distinguish by the name of the art of gesture : In this we shall only give it the name it bore frequently among the ancients. It was customary for them to call it *Chironomia*, and this word literally translated signifies the rule or direction of the hand.

As the art of gesture was subdivided likewise into several species, one ought not to be surprized to find so great a number of different dances among the ancients, as enabled Meursius <sup>b</sup> to compose an intire dictionary of their names, ranged in alphabetical order. Of all the musical arts the ancients were fondest of this, and consequently cultivated it most : wherefore this art, which taught the player what he was to do on the stage, at the same time that it instructed the orator in the rules of gesture, was subdivided into several parts, some of which were suitable to the very gravest persons.

Whosoever has read the works of the ancients in their original languages, must remember they have frequently seen the word *Saltatio* employed on occasions where it could not be understood of a dance like ours. I hope nevertheless that I shall not be troublesome to the reader by producing

<sup>a</sup> ATHENÆUS. Deipn. lib. 1.

<sup>b</sup> ORCHEST. J. MEURSI.



several other arguments to prove the ancients had many *Saltations* in which they did not dance.

Those authors who have given the division of the ancient Music, make the *Hypocritica* preside over their dance; this was what the Latins sometimes called the dumb music. We have already observed that its name came from that of ὑποκριτής, which in its proper sense signified a counterfeiter. But this was the common name the Greeks gave to their comedians.

The reader is already sensible, by what little I have said concerning this art, that the gestures, whose signification and use it prescribed, were not attitudes and movements which contribute to a genteel carriage; such as those of our dancers generally are. The gestures of the ancient dance must have expressed, and signified something; they must have been, as it were, a continued discourse. But let us proceed to the proofs I have promised.

Apuleius has left us the description of a representation of the judgment of Paris, executed by Pantomimes who played without speaking, and whose acting was called *Saltatio*. When this author speaks of the gate of the actors on the stage, he uses the word *incedere*, which properly signifies to walk. In another place, to signify that Venus spoke only with her eyes, he says <sup>a</sup> *she danced only with her eyes*. Besides 'tis observable

<sup>a</sup> *Et nonnunquam saltare solis oculis.* APUL. metam. lib. 10.

that the ancients hardly ever praise the legs and feet of their *Saltatores*, or dancers; the parts they commend principally are the arms and hands. An epigram of the Greek Anthology reproaches an actor who had danced in the character of Niobe, for using no more motion than if he had been the very rock into which Niobe was metamorphosed, in short, that he never stirred out of his place, and consequently that he had not danced a single step.

Πάντα καθ' ἰσορίην ὀρχέμενος, ἐν τὸ μέγιστον  
 Τῶν ἔργων παριδὼν, ἠνίασας μεγάλως.  
 Τὴν μὲν γὰρ Νιόβην ὀρχέμενος, ὡς λίθος ἔστης,  
 Καὶ πάλιν ὦν Καπανεύς, ἔξαπίνης ἔπεςες.  
 Ἀλλ' ἐπὶ τῆς Κανάκης ἀφυῶς, ὅτι καὶ ξίφος ἦν σοι,  
 Καὶ ζῶν ἐξῆλθες τῷτο παρ' ἰσορίην.

ANTHOL. GRÆC. lib. 2.

Nothing is more improper than a long dress for a person that dances after our manner. Now we find that the ancient *Saltatores* were clad in a long habit. Suetonius says <sup>a</sup> of Caligula, who was passionately fond of the *Sallation*: “That this prince  
 “ having sent for several persons of distinction to  
 “ his palace, he came in upon them very abruptly,  
 “ ly, clad in a Greek habit, which hung down  
 “ to his heels, and performed before them, the  
 “ gestures of a Monologue, accompanied with  
 “ instruments, after which he withdrew without

<sup>a</sup> Magno tibiæ et scabellorum crepitu cum palla tunica-  
 que talari profiluit, et desaltato cantico abiit. SUET. in CALIO.

“ speaking a word.” Velleius Paterculus relates<sup>a</sup> that Plancus, one of the Roman officers who followed Mark Antony’s fortune, having attempted to counterfeit Glaucus (a famous fisherman whom the ancients supposed to have been metamorphosed into a Triton, when grown mad after eating of a certain herb, he jumped into the sea) “ he disguised himself in the appearance of a Sea-God, and walking on his knees, danced the adventure of Glaucus.” Now a man dancing upon his knees, would have been a very foolish spectacle.

What Quintilian says with respect to the necessity of sending children to schools, where they might learn the art of *Saltation*, is sufficient alone to convince us that the art of gesture was the principal part of it. *We must not*, says this author,<sup>b</sup> *be ashamed to learn what we shall some day*

<sup>a</sup> *Cæruleatus & nudus, caputque redimitus arundine & caudam trahens, genibus innixus, Glaucum saltasset, PATERC. hist. lib. 2.*

<sup>b</sup> *Et certè quod facere oporteat non indignum est discere, præsertim hæc chironomia, quæ est (ut nomine ipso declaratur) lex gestus, & ab illis heroicis temporibus orta sit, & à summis Græciæ viris, & ab ipso etiam Socrate probata . . . . . Neque id veteribus Romanis dedecori fuit : argumentum est, sacerdotum nomine ac religione durans ad hoc tempus saltatio . . . . . cujus etiam disciplinæ usus in nostram usque ætatem sine reprehensione descendit. A me tamen non ultra pueriles annos retinebitur, nec in his ipsis diu. Neque enim gestum oratoris componi ad similitudinem saltatoris volo, sed subesse aliquid ex hac exercitatione. QUINT. Inst. lib. 1. cap. 11.*

or other be obliged to practise. The Chironomy, which properly signifies the art of gesture, is a thing that has been known as early as the heroic times; and the greatest men of Greece, and even Socrates himself, approved of it. Do not we see likewise by the ancient institution of the dances of the Salian priests, that our old Romans did not condemn this art? In short, the practice has been transmitted down to us, without being censured. But I would not advise a boy to be left too long with his master, since it is sufficient for him to know and retain as much of this exercise as will give him a grace and easy air in his action. For the gesture of an orator ought to be very different from that of a dancer.

And yet Macrobius has preserved a fragment of one of Scipio Æmilianus's harangues, in which the destroyer of Carthage speaks with great warmth against the inconveniencies attending the schools, where they taught the art of gesture. Our young people, says Scipio,<sup>a</sup> are sent to a school of comedians to learn to recite; an exercise which our ancestors considered as a servile profession. Besides, when the children of people of distinction frequent those schools in which the art of saltation is taught, do they not mix with the most scandalous company? We find likewise by an oration of Cicero in defence of

<sup>a</sup> Eunt in ludum histrionum, discunt cantare, quod majores nostri ingenuis probro duci voluerunt. Eunt, inquam, in ludum saltatorium inter cinædos, virgines puerique ingenui MACROB. SATURN. lib. 3. cap. 8.



Muræna, whom Cato had reproached for being a *dancer*, that the practice of *Saltation* was not tolerated among people of note, unless under very particular circumstances.

Let us return to Quintilian. This author says in another place, <sup>a</sup> *That an orator must not pronounce like a comedian, nor gesticulate like a dancer.* Now one of his reasons is in all probability, because the gestures taught by the art of *Saltation*, were not intirely designed for giving a better grace and air; nor were they, if I may so express myself, gestures void of sense, but frequently such as had a very sensible meaning; such as even spoke. Now these significative gestures are of two sorts, the one natural, and the other artificial.

Natural gestures are those which naturally accompany the speech. This gesture, which, to make use of a poetic expression, speaks to the eyes, gives a stronger energy to discourse, and animates at the same time the speaker and the hearer. If a man of any vivacity is hindered to gesticulate when he speaks, his expression becomes languid, and the fire of his eloquence is extinguished. On the other hand an orator, whom we both see and hear, moves us much more, than one whose voice we hear without beholding his gestures. But 'tis very rare that the natural gesture signifies any thing distinctly, without the

*Non Comædum in pronuntiatione, non saltatorem in gestu facio.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 1. cap. 12.

assistance of language. This happens only in two cases. The first is, when the natural gesture signifies an *affection*, such as a head-ach, or a fit of impatience. But it is not even then sufficient to render the circumstances of this affection intelligible. Secondly, it signifies something without the help of speech, when it is the same sign as that which commonly accompanies a certain expression. 'Tis then supposed, that the person who uses this gesture, does it with the intention of saying what is commonly said when people make this external sign. The gesture of those who live south of us, being much more distinct than ours, 'tis much easier to comprehend the meaning of it, when it is used without speech, than to understand what our gesture signifies under the like circumstance. But these natural gestures have always a very imperfect, and frequently even an equivocal signification.

A man therefore who wants to express distinctly without speaking, any other thing besides an *affection*, is obliged to have recourse to those artificial demonstrations and gestures, which do not derive their signification from nature, but from human institution. A proof of their being only artificial signs, is, that like words they are understood only in some countries. The very simplest of these gestures bear no signification but in a particular province ; for in other parts people make use of different signs to express the same thing. For example, the gesture of the hand, which is used in France when calling a person, is not

not the same as that which is practised in Italy. A Frenchman makes a sign to those whom he wants to come towards him, by lifting up his right hand, with the fingers turned upwards, and drawing it several times towards his body ; whereas an Italian, to make the same sign, lowers his right hand, and turns his fingers towards the ground. People in different countries have a different manner of saluting one another. The demonstrations and gestures which a person, who will not or cannot speak, are not exactly the same as those which are used with speech. One who has a mind to express by signs and without uttering a word, *my father is dead*, is obliged to supply the want of words with studied signs far different from those he would use in pronouncing this sentence. These signs may be called artificial, or to express it logically, *instituted gestures*. 'Tis known that logic divides all its signs into two sorts, natural, and instituted. Thus the smoke is a natural sign of fire, but a crown is only an instituted sign, and an emblem of royalty. Thus a man who beats his breast, uses a natural gesture, which expresses an amazement or surprize : a person who describes by gesticulating, a forehead incircled with a diadem, uses only an instituted gesture, which signifies a crowned head.

Tho' in common representations gesture and speech accompanied one another on the stage, yet the gesture was taught in schools as an art that shewed the manner of expressing one's self, even without speaking. Wherefore 'tis highly probable,

probable, that the professors of this art, instructed their pupils not only in every imaginable method of making themselves understood by the help of natural gestures, but that they even taught them how to express their thoughts by making use of instituted ones. The orator had no occasion to employ those artificial gestures to make himself understood. Besides, it was almost impossible but several of those gestures must have been incompatible with the decency he was to observe in his declamation. Here you have, methinks, the reason why Quintilian so often forbids his orator to imitate the gesticulation of dancers or *Saltatores*.

What Quintilian says in another place <sup>a</sup> seems to confirm my conjecture. *All the abovementioned gestures are performed naturally at the same time that the words are pronounced. But there is another kind of gestures, which are significative only inasmuch as they describe the thing which we want to express by their assistance. Such is the gesture representing the action of a physician feeling a pulse, made use of to signify a sick person. Nothing is more vicious in an*

<sup>a</sup> Et ii quidem de quibus sum locutus cum ipsis vocibus naturaliter exeunt gestus: alii sunt qui res imitatione significant; ut si ægrum, tentantis venas medici similitudine . . . . . ostendas; quod est genus quàm longissime in actione fugiendum. Abesse enim plurimum à Saltatore debet Orator, ut sit gestus ad sensum magis quàm ad verba accommodatus: quod etiam histrionibus paulò gravioribus facere moris fuit. QUINT. Inst. lib. 11. cap. 3.



orator than to use this kind of gesture in his declamation, which should be intirely different from that of a dancer. The orator ought to make his gesture agree with the sentiment he expresses, and not with the particular signification of the word he pronounces. We see, that even comedians who endeavour to act with due decorum, submit to this precept, that is, they either never, or but very seldom, make use of instituted signs in their declamation.

Cicero says the same thing pretty near as Quintilian. “ He allows <sup>a</sup> a person who is brought “ up to the bar, to endeavour to acquire the “ grace and free air of Roscius, but he will not “ have him mould his gesture in imitation of “ that which was practised by comedians.” Very likely the greatest part of the actors did not do as those whom Quintilian calls *Histriones paulò graviore*s. A great many comedians chose to make use of the instituted rather than the natural signs, because the former seemed fitter to excite laughter, as well as to render the action more animated. Nevertheless persons of a very good taste disapproved of this practice. Cicero says, <sup>b</sup> “ that

<sup>a</sup> *Quis neget opus esse in hoc oratorio motu statuque, Roscii gestu & venustate? Tamen nemo suaserit studiosis dicendi adolescentibus in gestu discendo, histrionum more elaborare. Cic. de orat. lib. 1.*

<sup>b</sup> *Nam & palæstrici motus sæpe sunt odiosiores, & histrionum nonnulli gestus inepti non vacant offensione, & in utroque genere quæ sunt recta & simplicia laudantur. Cic. de off. lib. 1.*

“ plain and natural gestures are the most agreeable in theatrical entertainments; and that the comedians offend the sensible spectator, when they use silly ridiculous gestures, as it sometimes happens.”

We find a very curious description of the art of gesticulation in a letter written by Cassiodorus to Albinus, commissioning him to make the people decide whether Theodoron or Halandius was the best actor, as the point in question was to promote the cleverest of the two. *Our ancestors*, says Cassiodorus, <sup>a</sup> *gave the name of MUTE MUSIC to that art, which shews how to speak without opening the mouth, to express every thing by gestures, and even to render intelligible by certain movements as well as by different attitudes of the body, what we should find very difficult to communicate by a continued discourse, or a whole page in writing.* I fancy nevertheless that the instituted signs did not bear always a distinct signification of what they were meant to express, tho’ a kind of allusion might have been observed in their first institution to the things they signified. *The Mimus is out*, says <sup>b</sup> Apuleius. We shall see by what St Austin says of the Pantomimes, that the relation between the gesture and the thing signified was not

<sup>a</sup> *Hanc partem musicæ disciplinæ mutam majores nostri nominaverunt, scilicet quæ ore clauso manibus loquitur, Et quibusdam gesticulationibus facit intelligi, quod vix narrante lingua aut scripturæ textu possit agnoscî. CASSIODORUS var. epist. lib. 1. ep. 20.*

<sup>b</sup> *Mimus hallucinatur. APUL. FLOR. lib. 3.*

so clear, as to be understood without an interpreter by those who had not learnt the language of the ancient dance.

The eastern nations have several sorts of dances like those described by Cassiodorus; and all the relations of travellers, especially thro' Persia, speak of these dances. The states of Asia have been as subject to political revolutions as those of Europe; but they seem to have been less subject to moral revolutions. The manner of dress, as well as the other national customs of Asia, were never subject to so much change, as they have been, and still are in the western parts of Europe.

We find that the ancients called the same person indiscriminately, *Saltator* and *Gesticulator*, because the *Saltation* was the genus, and the *Gesticulation* the species. The orator Hortensius, Cicero's cotemporary and rival, was in his manner and dress what we call finical and affected. It was said of him, that after having been a long time an actor, he was become at length an actress; for which reason they used to call him *Dionysia*, which, according to Gellius,<sup>a</sup> who gives this recital, was the name of a celebrated woman-dancer. On the other hand the action of a comedian was also called gesticulation, as may be seen in the recital of the adventure of Andronicus the poet. Thus it was not only customary to use the word *dancing*,

<sup>a</sup> *Torquatus non jam histrionem esse Hortensium diceret, sed gesticulariam, Dionysiamque eum notissimæ Saltatriculæ nomine appellaret.* AUL. GELL. Noct. Attic. lib. i. cap. 9.

when speaking of gestures, but likewise to apply it to the action of comedians. *Saltare* and *gestum agere* were used so indiscriminately, that they were frequently said to *dance a dramatic piece* instead of reciting it on the stage; and this not only when speaking of the representations of Pantomimes, who, as we shall see presently, acted without opening their lips, but likewise when mentioning the representations of common tragedies or comedies, in which the recitation of the verses formed a part of the execution of the play.

*Whenever you write to me*, says Ovid, to a friend who had sent him word that the *Medea* or some other composition of this poet was acted with great applause, *that the theatre is full, as often as my pieces are danced; and that my verses are always clapt.*

*Carmina cum pleno saltari nostra theatro,  
Versibus & plaudi scribis, amice, meis.*

OVID. Trist. 5. eleg. 7.

Gellius, to signify that the actors who formerly pronounced, used likewise to gesticulate, says, *that those who in his time sung without stirring, were accustomed before to dance while they were singing.*

Juvenal says, that the carver at the better sort of tables, used to *dance* while he was carving. Now 'tis possible to carve and gesticulate; but

\* *Saltabundi autem caneant quæ nunc stantes canunt.* Id. ibid. lib. 20. cap. 2.



one cannot carve and dance after our manner. Besides, this poet adds by way of raillery, that there is a kind of merit in cutting up a pullet and a hare with a varied gesture suited to each operation. There were particular schools at Rome for this kind of *Saltation*.

*Struētozem interea, ne qua indignatio desit,  
Saltantem specta, & chironomonta volanti  
Cultello, donec peragat dictata magistri  
Omnia ; nec minimo sanè discrimine refert,  
Quo gestu lepores & quo gallina secetur.*

Juv. *sat.* 5.

*Mean while thy indignation yet to raise,  
The carver dancing round each dish, surveys  
With flying knife ; and as his art directs,  
With proper gestures ev'ry fowl dissects.*

MR WILLIAM BOWLES.

In fine, Aristides Quintilianus, after speaking of the friendship which Cicero had for Roscius ; charmed with his exactness in observing measure, and with the elegance of his gesture, calls this celebrated comedian a *dancer*. He gives him the name of ὀρχηστῆς, which has the same signification as the Latin word *saltator* ; but we shall see presently by a passage of Cassiodorus that this Greek word had been latinized. In effect, tho' Roscius spoke often on the stage, yet Cicero <sup>a</sup> generally commends him for his gesture.

*Ergo ille corporis motu tantum amorem sibi conciliarat à  
nobis omnibus. CIC. pro ARCHIA.*

Cicero,

Cicero, as Macrobius relates <sup>a</sup>, used to contend sometimes with Roscius, who should express best the same sentiment in different ways, each of the disputants making use of those talents in which he particularly excelled. Roscius therefore rendered by a mute action the sense of the phrase which Cicero had composed and recited; and proper arbiters were to judge who had succeeded best. CICERO changed afterwards the words and turn of the phrase, without enervating the sense; and Roscius was obliged in his turn to express the sense by other gestures, without weakening it by his mute action.

Thus we have said enough concerning the art of Saltation considered in its full extent. 'Tis plain by what has been here advanced, that the ancients practised those lessons in their religious ceremonies, at table, and on other occasions. But our subject does not require us to follow the Saltation thro' all the uses it was applied to; let us come now more particularly to the *theatrical Saltation*.

<sup>a</sup> *Et certè satis constat contendere eum cum histrione solitum, utrum ille sæpius eandem sententiam variis gestibus efficeret, an ipse per eloquentiæ copiam sermone diverso pronuntiaret.* MACROB. SATURN. lib. 2. cap. 10.



## C H A P. XIV.

*Of the theatrical Dance or Saltation. How the player that gesticulated, could act in concert with the other who recited. Of the dance of the Chorus.*

THE art of gesture suitable to the theatrical declamation, was subdivided into three different methods. The first taught the *Emmelia* proper for tragic declamation. The second the *Cordax*, fitted to the declamation of comedies. The third shewed the *Sicinnis*, a gesture proper for the recitation of those dramatic pieces which the ancients called Satyres. The personages who recited in these three kinds of poems, used several gesticulations particularly adapted to each.

Lucian nevertheless in his treatise of dancing, says, that in executing the comic pieces, they frequently used to mix the proper gesticulations of satyre with those of comedy, that is the *Sicinnis* with the *Cordax*.

How was it possible (some will say) for the ancients to reduce these methods to writing, and to find out notes and characters, which should express all the attitudes and movements of the body?

<sup>2</sup> ATHENÆUS, lib. I.

Really I can't tell; but Feuillée's Choregraphy, which I have already made mention of, shews the thing was possible. There is no more difficulty in learning to make gestures by notes, than in knowing by notes how to make steps and figures. Now that the latter is possible, is demonstrated by Feuillée's book.

Tho' we have not reduced the use of gestures into an art, and for want of sufficiently canvassing this subject we have not consequently divided the objects as much as the ancients; yet 'tis visible that tragedy and comedy have their own peculiar gestures. The action, attitude, carriage, and countenance of our actors who recite in tragedy, are not the same as when they act in comedy. Directed merely by instinct they render us sensible of the principles on which the ancients founded the division of the art of theatrical gesture, and reduced it into three different methods. *Nature*, as Cicero observes, *has given each passion, and sentiment its particular expression on the countenance, as well as its proper tone and gesture.* The passions generally treated in tragedy are not the same as those of comedy.

We find several things in a chapter of Quintilian's Institutes, where he speaks more copiously than elsewhere of the gesture suitable to an orator, which plainly indicate that the comedians had particular schools in his time, where they were

<sup>a</sup> *Omnis enim motus animi suum quendam à natura habet vul-  
tum, & sonum & gestum.* Cic. de orat.



instructed in the right theatrical gesture. Here he dissuades his pupil sometimes from following what the comedians taught in relation to some particular part of their action; and at other times he cites them as good masters. *Those who teach the Scenic art*, says he in another part of the same chapter, *find that the gesture made only with the head, is a bad gesture*. It even appears that those professors had what we call terms of art. Quintilian speaking of the countenance which an orator should shew for some time before he has commenced his discourse, when the eyes of the whole audience are fixt upon him, says <sup>b</sup>, that the comedians gave in their style to this studied silence the appellation of *pauses*.

As the ancient players could use but very seldom that kind of gesture which we have distinguished by the name of *instituted*; in short, as their *Saltation* was of a particular kind, it was natural for them to have separate schools and professors. Besides, they were obliged to be masters of an art which particularly belonged to them, I mean that of adapting the time and cadence of their gesture to the recitation of the *Singer*, who sometimes spoke in their stead. I shall endeavour to explain here more intelligibly than I have hitherto done; how this point could be effected, that is, how the action of the player who gesti-

<sup>a</sup> *Solo capite gestum facere scenici quoque doctores vitiosum putarunt.* QUINT. Inst. lib. II. cap. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *In hac cunctatione, sunt quaedam non indecentes, ut vocant Scenici, moræ.* Id. ibid.

culated, could accompany the pronounciation of the person that recited. Before I gave this last explication, I thought proper to wait 'till my reader had been a little better acquainted with the subject; tho' I exposed myself thereby to the danger of falling into some repetitions. The reader will please to remember what we have already observed, that the Hypocritical music presided over the *Saltation*. Now Music, says Quintilian, <sup>a</sup> *directs the movements of the body, as it regulates the progression of the voice.* The Hypocritical music shewed therefore how to follow the measure in gesticulating, as the Metrical music taught the method of following it in reciting. The *Hypocritica* made use of the *Rhythmica*; for the musical arts could not each of them have their particular districts so separated, but that they sometimes met in the same lesson; one musical art depending frequently on the assistance of another. This is already something to our purpose.

The actor therefore who recited, and the person that gesticulated, were obliged to follow the same measure and time. We have seen in Quintilian, <sup>b</sup> that they endeavoured to establish a proportion between the gesture and words of the orator, so that his action should be neither too quick, nor broken. Very likely this

<sup>a</sup> *Numeros musice duplices habet, in vocibus & in corpore.*  
Id. ibid. lib. 1. cap. 10.

<sup>b</sup> See chapter 2. of the third part.

idea arose from hence, that the actor who recited on the stage ought to pronounce only a certain number of words, while the other made a particular gesture. The former in all probability was obliged to pronounce a greater number of words, when the second made another gesture. Be this as it will, 'tis certain, they both followed the same measure beaten by the same person, who had before him the verses recited, whose syllables, as we have already observed, pointed out the time. Above these verses they noted the gestures which the players were to make, measure by measure. The Rhythmical music, says Aristides Quintilianus, regulates the gesture, as well as the recitation of the verses.

In what manner soever this was done, we know that the actors agreed perfectly well in their different parts. Seneca says, <sup>b</sup> 'Tis surprising to see the gesture of eminent comedians on the stage overtake and even keep pace with speech, notwithstanding the velocity of the tongue. 'Tis plain that Seneca's meaning does not relate here to a person who executes both at the same time; for there is nothing less surprising than to see his gesture move as quick as his pronunciation. The thing is very natural; and there can be no room for admiration; but when one actor recites,

<sup>a</sup> ARISTIDES de Musica. lib. i. c. 10. § 16.

<sup>b</sup> Mirari solemus scenæ peritos, quod in omnem significationem rerum & effectuum parata illorum est manus, & verborum velocitatem gestus assequitur. SENECA. ep. 121.



while another gesticulates. We find likewise by a passage of Cicero, <sup>a</sup> that a comedian who dropped a gesture out of time, was hissed as much as one who was mistaken in pronouncing a verse. Lucian observes also, that a gesture not in its proper measure was esteemed a capital fault in an actor; which occasioned the proverb among the Greeks, *To commit a solecism with the hand.*

As the art of Saltation is lost, it would be a rash attempt to pretend to divine all the particulars of a practice perfected by experience and the reflections of many thousands of persons. What we know for certain is, that the people were very sensible when there was any mistake committed. 'Tis true, the habit of being present at those spectacles, rendered them, as Cicero observes, <sup>b</sup> so very delicate, that they found fault even with inflexions and false concords, tho' these concords produce a good effect, when managed with art.

To return to the art of gesture, there is no manner of doubt but the ancient comedians excelled in this part of the declamation. They had very great natural dispositions for it, if we may form a judgment of them, by what we observe in their

<sup>a</sup> *Histrion si paululum se moveat extra numerum, aut si versus pronuntiatus est syllabâ unâ longior, aut brevior, exhibetur & exploditur.* Cic. in Parad.

<sup>b</sup> *Quanto molliores sunt & delicatioris in cantu flexiones & falsæ voculæ quàm certæ & severæ, quibus tamen non modo ausleri, sed si sæpius fiant, multitudo ipsa reclamationat.* Cic. de orat. lib. 3.



countrymen our co-temporaries. They applied themselves with great care and assiduity to their profession, as we shall presently make appear; and if they failed or were careless in their action, the spectators, who were capable of judging, took care to set them right. Tertullian says, *That this gesticulation was as bewitching as the discourse of the serpent who seduced the first woman.* Had the critics, who have attempted to censure or elucidate Aristotle's poetics, been attentive to the signification of the word *Ὀρχήσις* or *Saltatio*, they would not have found it so unaccountable that the ancient chorus should *dance*, even in the most solemn and melancholy parts of tragedy. 'Tis easy to conceive that those dances were nothing else but gestures and signs, by which the personages of the chorus expressed their sentiments; whether they spoke, or testified by a mute action, how much they were moved with the event in which they were concerned. This declamation obliged frequently the chorus to walk upon the stage, and as the evolutions which a great number of people make at the same time, cannot be rightly executed without being previously concerted, (unless they were to fall into the irregular motions of a multitude,) the ancients took care to prescribe certain rules to the steps of the chorus. These regular evolutions have occasioned our critics to take the *Saltation* of the chorus, for a kind of balet or dancing after our manner.

*Ipsę gestus colubrina vis est.* TERTULL. de Spectac.

The chorus at first had particular masters who taught them their parts; but the poet Æschilus,<sup>a</sup> who made a very particular study of the art of theatrical representations, undertook to instruct them himself, and his example, it seems, was followed by the rest of the Greek poets.

We must not therefore form an idea of the figure which those ancient chorus's made at the Athenian and Roman theatres, from what we imagine we should behold on our stages, were our chorus to declaim. We fancy to ourselves something like the immoveable chorus of the opera, composed of fellows the greatest part of whom do not even know how to walk right, and who of course must render the most moving scenes ridiculous by their awkward action. We imagine something in the same nature as the chorus of our comedies, consisting of understrappers, supernumeraries, and the very worst actors, who perform but wretchedly a part which they are not used to. But the chorus of the ancient tragedies was executed by able and experienced actors, and the expence that attended this representation was so very great, that a particular law was passed at Athens, ordaining the magistrates to defray it.

In order therefore to form a just notion of the ancient chorus, we must represent to ourselves a great number of excellent actors, giving answer to a personage who addresses his discourse to them.

<sup>a</sup> ATHEN. lib. 1.

We are to fancy each actor of the chorus, using gestures and attitudes suitable to what he intended actually to express, and proper to the particular character he represented. We are to imagine we see the old man, the child, the woman, and the young man of the chorus testifying their joy, or affliction, or their other passions, by particular gestures suitable to their age, and sex. Such a spectacle, methinks, was not the least moving scene of the ancient tragedy. Thus we find <sup>a</sup> that one of the chorus's of Æschilus made several pregnant women fall in labor in the very theatre at Athens. This accident induced the Athenians to reduce the number of the actors of those terrible chorus's to fifteen or twenty, which before were sometimes composed of fifty personages. Some passages of our new operas, where the poet makes a principal personage address his speech to the chorus who say a few words to him in answer, have been very well received, tho' the actors of the chorus do not declaim. I am surprized that this practice of the ancients has not been more followed by modern poets.

In fine, we have seen a chorus, which without speaking imitated only the mute action of the chorus of the ancient tragedy, meet with great success and applause at the opera, when they were executed with some attention. I mean those balets which had scarce any dancing movements, but were only composed of gestures, exter-

<sup>a</sup> *In the tragedy of the Eumenides.*

nal signs, and in a word, of a dumb shew; which Lulli placed in the funeral pomp of Psyche, and in that of Alcestes, as well as in the second act of Theseus, where the poet introduces some old men a dancing; as also the balet of the fourth act of Atys, and in the first scene of the fourth act of Isis, where Quinault brings on the stage the inhabitants of the *Hyperborean* regions. The above-mentioned demi-chorus's (if I be allowed this expression) afforded a very engaging spectacle, when Lulli had them executed by dancers who were under perfect subjection to him, and who neither durst make a dancing step when he had forbidden it, nor omit executing their proper gesture exactly at the time prescribed. It was very easy, by seeing the execution of these dances, to comprehend how the measure could regulate the gesture at the theatres of the ancients. The ingenious person here mentioned, had conceived by the sole force of his imagination, that the representation might derive something of a pathos even from the mute action of the chorus; for I do not apprehend that he hit upon this idea by means of the writings of the ancients, whose passages relating to the dancing of the chorus, had not been yet understood in the manner now explained.

Lulli had so great an attention to these balets, that in composing them he employed a particular dancing-master, whose name was Olivet. This was the person (and not Des Broffes or Beauchamps, whom Lulli commonly  
made



made use of) that composed the balets of the funeral pomp of Psyche, and Alcestes, and likewise those of the old men of Theseus, of the melancholy dreams of Atys, and the quakers and shivers of Isis. The latter was composed intirely of gestures and external signs of people shivering with cold; and had not so much as a single step of our ordinary dance. 'Tis also observable that those balets which were very acceptable at that time, were executed by dancers almost unpractised in the business to which Lulli applied them. But 'tis time now to return to my subject.

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## C H A P. XV.

*Observations concerning the manner in which the dramatic pieces of the ancients were represented. Of the passion which the Greeks and Romans had for theatrical entertainments; as also of the study the actors made of their art, and the recompences they received.*

THE operations of our senses cannot be supplied by the imagination. As we have not therefore been present at the representation of theatrical pieces, in which one actor recites, while another gesticulates, it would be wrong, methinks, to commend, and still more so to condemn positively the ancient division of the declamation.

tion. I have already taken notice that there was not that absurdity in the thing, as appears to us at first sight : for we cannot tell how far the representation might have been imbellished by circumstances as well as by the ability of the actors. Several learned men of the northern parts of Europe have decided upon the mere authority of a narrative, that our operas are very ridiculous spectacles, and fit only for the amusement of children ; and yet they changed their opinion afterwards upon seeing these representations. They had been convinced by experience (which alone in this case was capable of persuading them) that a mother, tho' she bewails in music the loss of her children, is nevertheless a personage capable of exciting sentiments of compassion and sorrow.

The puppet-shews in which the declamation is divided, amuse us, notwithstanding the action is executed by a kind of automaton. It will signify nothing to say that this childish show diverts us, because the ridiculousness of the execution is perfectly well adapted to that of the subject. The puppet-opera of La Grille's invention, which was established at Paris about the year 1674, drew the whole town for two winters successively ; and yet this spectacle was a common opera, with this difference, that the part of the action was executed by a large puppet, whose gestures were suited to the recitatives sung by a musician, who emitted his voice thro' an opening contrived in the floor of the stage. I have seen operas represented in this manner in Italy, and yet no body thought

them

them a ridiculous spectacle. The operas which a great cardinal in his youth took a pleasure in exhibiting after this manner, were vastly entertaining, because the puppets being near four feet high, bore a greater resemblance to human personages. Who is it then that can pretend to determine that those very spectacles would be disagreeable, were a company of excellent actors, whom we had been already accustomed to see masked; were they, I say, to execute perfectly the gesticulation, which a puppet can execute but very indifferently?

The conduct and writings of the Romans sufficiently shew they were a people that did not want sense or judgment. When they determined in favor of that kind of declamation, in which the gesture and pronunciation were frequently executed by different actors, they had already been acquainted for upwards of a hundred and twenty years with the natural and plain manner of reciting, and yet they thought proper to quit it for the other more composite manner.

Besides, the immense expence the Greeks and Romans were at in the representation of their dramatic pieces, is a convincing argument of the attention they gave to those entertainments. Now would not this attention which continued during the space of eight hundred years (for so long were the theatres open at Rome after the adventure of Livius Andronicus) would it not, I say, have been sufficient to undeceive the Romans in  
respect



respect to the division of the declamation, between two actors, had this division been so absurd a thing as we are apt at first to imagine. We must therefore divest ourselves of our first prejudice, in the same manner as men of sense throw off those prejudices which incline them to dislike the modes and customs of foreign countries.

The representation of three of Sophocles's tragedies, cost the Athenians more than the war of Peloponnesus. We know what immense expences the Romans were at in erecting theatres, amphitheatres, and circus's, even in the provincial cities; Some of those buildings which are still intire, are the most valuable monuments of ancient architecture; and we admire even the ruins of those that are fallen. The Roman history abounds also with facts which evince the immoderate passion the people had for shows, and that both princes and private persons put themselves to immense expences to gratify them. I shall mention what regards only the payment of the actors. Macrobius says, that Æsopus, a celebrated tragic player of whom we have already made mention, and who was Cicero's co-temporary, left to a son of his, whom Horace<sup>b</sup> and Pliny mention as a famous spend-thrift, a fortune of five millions of livres which he had gained by his profession. We read in Pliny that Roscius the

<sup>a</sup> MACROB. Saturn. lib. 2. cap. 10.

<sup>b</sup> HOR. sat. l. 2. c. 10. PLIN. lib. 10.



comedian, an intimate friend of Cicero, had upwards of a hundred thousand livres a year for his salary<sup>a</sup>. This player's allowance must have been increased since the time in which Pliny states his income, because Macrobius assures us, <sup>b</sup> he received near nine hundred livres a day of the public money, which sum was intirely for his own use, being under no obligation of dividing it with the company.

The oration which Cicero pronounced for this very Roscius, justifies the account given by Pliny and Macrobius. The principal point of Roscius's law-suit related to a slave, whom Fannius pretended to have committed to Roscius's care, in order to teach him the theatrical art, after which Roscius and Fannius were to sell the slave, and divide the money betwixt them. Cicero does not allow there was any such agreement, but pretends that Panurgus (for so the slave was called) must be supposed to be the intire property of Roscius, because his worth as a comedian exceeded by far his value as a slave. Panurgus's person, adds Cicero, is not worth thirty pistoles, but Roscius's eleve is worth twenty thousand crowns. Fannius's slave could have earnt but eighteen

<sup>a</sup> *Quippe cum jam apud majores nostros Roscius histrio sextertium quingenta millia annua meritaſſe prodatur.* PLIN. lib. 7. cap. 39.

<sup>b</sup> *Tanta fuit gratia ut mercedem diurnam de publico mille denarios sine gregalibus solus acceperit.* MACROB. Saturn. lib. 2. cap. 10.

pence a day, but Roscius's pupil can earn eighteen pistoles. Can you imagine, says Cicero in another place, that so disinterested a person as Roscius would attempt to appropriate, at the expence of his honor, a slave of the value only of thirty pistoles; Roscius, who for these twelve years has acted for us gratis, a generosity that has deprived him of two millions of livres? I do not, adds Cicero, set too high a rate on the salary he could have received; we should have given at least as much to him as to Dionysia. We have already taken notice of this actress. Thus we see in what manner the actors were payed during the time of the republic. Macrobius says, that Julius Cæsar gave Laberius twenty thousand crowns, to engage this poet to act in a piece which he had composed for the stage: one might find several other prodigalities of the like nature under the other emperors. At length the emperor Marcus Aurelius, <sup>a</sup> who is frequently distinguished by the appellation of Antoninus the philosopher, gave orders that the actors in shows which certain magistrates were obliged to exhibit to the people, should not demand more than five pieces of gold for every representation; and that the person who defrayed the expences, should not give them more than double that price. Those gold pieces were of the same value pretty near as our French Lewidores of thirty to a mark, which are current for twenty four li-

<sup>a</sup> *Capit. in M. ANTONINO.*

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vres. Livy finishes his dissertation on the rise and progress of theatrical representations at Rome, with observing, <sup>a</sup> *that a diversion which had so inconsiderable a beginning, was degenerated into so magnificent and sumptuous a spectacle, that the very wealthiest kingdoms were hardly able to support the expence of it.* As the Romans themselves were become for the most part declaimers and gesticulators, no wonder they had so great an esteem for their actors. The elder Seneca says, in the introduction to his first book of controversies, <sup>b</sup> *that the young people in his time made the study of these arts their most serious occupation.*

This evil continually increased. Ammianus Marcellinus, who lived under Constantine the Great, says, <sup>c</sup> *How few are those families which cultivate the liberal arts? Nothing is heard now but singing and fiddling. Instead of a philosopher, the custom is to send for a singer;*

<sup>a</sup> *Quam ab sano initio res in hanc vel. opulentis regnis vix tolerabilem insaniam venerit.* LIV. hist. 1. 7.

<sup>b</sup> *Malarum rerum industria invasit animos. Cantandi saltandique nunc obscæna studia effæminatos tenent.* SENECA. Contr. lib. 1.

<sup>c</sup> *Quod cum ita sit, paucæ domus studiorum seriis cultibus antea celebratæ, nunc ludibriis ignaviæ torrentes exundant, vocali sono, perstabili tinnitu fidiam resultantes. Denique pro philosopho cantor, & in locum oratoris doctor artium ludicarum accitur & bibliothecis sepulchrorum ritu in perpetuum clausis, fabricantur hydraulica, & lyræ in speciem carpentorum ingentes, ibique, & histrionici gestus instrumenta non levia.* AMMI. MARCELL. hist. lib. 14.

and instead of an orator, for a professor of the theatrical arts. Libraries are shut up like tombs, and people's whole study is taken up in making hydraulics, huge lyres, various flutes, and all sorts of instruments used in regulating the gesticulation of actors.

I must acquaint the reader, that in reducing the value of the Roman coin to the French standard, I have not followed Budeus, tho' his calculation was right when that learned man wrote. But the same silver mark that was not worth twelve livres, current money, when Budeus published his work *De Asse*,<sup>a</sup> was worth sixty livres when reduced to the coin that was current when this last estimation was made.<sup>b</sup> Those who translate or comment upon ancient writers, ought to be attentive to this point, as also to value the sum of which the author makes mention, by the proportion between gold and silver, which can hardly be reckoned the same it was in the time of the Roman republic. Ten ounces of fine silver were then equivalent to an ounce of fine gold; whereas for an ounce of fine gold in France, we must now give very near fifteen ounces of fine silver. There are a great many countries in Europe where gold is still dearer.

In fine, 'tis reasonable, methinks, to judge of the progress a nation made in arts of which we have no monuments to found a solid decision, by the progress this very nation

<sup>a</sup> Under FRANCIS I.

<sup>b</sup> In 1718.



has made in other arts of which we have some remains : Now the monuments extant of poetry, eloquence, painting, sculpture, and the architecture of the ancients, are an evident proof that they were very skilful in all these arts, and had carried them to a high degree of perfection. Since we must be determined some way or other in respect to their ability in the art of theatrical representations, why should not our opinion be in favor of their skill and success, so as to incline us to think we should give those representations, could we see them, the same commendations we bestow on their buildings, statues and writings? May we not even draw from the excellence of the poems of the ancients a presumption in favor of the merit of their actors? Have we not the very strongest reasons to believe, that those actors must have excelled in their profession? The most part of them were born slaves, and consequently subject from their infancy to make as long and as rigorous an apprenticeship as their masters thought proper. If they became eminent in their art, they were sure of acquiring liberty, riches, and the public esteem. In Greece those who excelled in the theatrical art were reputed persons of distinction, and we have even instances of ambassadors and ministers of state taken from this profession. <sup>a</sup> Tho' the Roman laws excluded most comedians from the free-

<sup>a</sup> LIV. *hist.* l. 24. AUGUST. *de Civit.* l. 2. cap. 11. ARNOB. *adv. Gent.* lib. 7.

dom of the city, the public nevertheless had a great value for them, as we shall presently demonstrate. They acted the busy body at Rome with as much impunity as the Eunuchs who sing at present in Italy.

We are informed by facts that the apprenticeship of those who were designed for the stage, and who in all probability were none but such as seemed to have a disposition for the business, was extremely tedious. Cicero tells us, <sup>a</sup> that tragic players used to practise whole years before they appeared upon the stage. They made even a part of their apprenticeship in declaiming seated, that they might find afterwards a greater facility when they declaimed standing upon the stage. A person accustomed to perform a thing more difficult than the ordinary exercises of his employment, goes thro' these afterwards with greater ease and grace. Now the breast is more at ease in a man standing than sitting.

Hence it was usual to exercise the gladiators <sup>b</sup> with heavier arms than those with which they fought. For, as Quintilian observes, <sup>c</sup> *the labor we go thro' in our apprenticeship, should be much harder than what we are to endure when we become masters of our art.*

<sup>a</sup> Cic. de orat. lib. 1. vid. infra.

<sup>b</sup> *Gladiatores gravioribus armis discunt quàm pugnant.* SEN. Cont. 1. 4.

<sup>c</sup> *Difficiliora enim debent esse quæ exercent, quo sit levius ipsum illud in quod exercent.* QUINT. lib. 11. cap. 2.

Cicero informs<sup>a</sup> us, that the great actors would never speak a word in the morning, before they had unfolded, if I may so express myself, methodically their voice; letting it loose by degrees, that they might not hurt the organs by emitting it with precipitancy and violence. They likewise took care to lye a-bed during this exercise. After having acted, they sat themselves down, and in this posture they folded again, as it were, the organs of their voice, raising it to the highest tone to which they had ascended in declaiming, and depressing it afterwards successively to all the other tones, 'till they came at length to the very lowest. Notwithstanding the advantages that arose from eloquence at Rome, and the additional ornament a fine voice was to eloquence, yet Cicero will not suffer an orator to make himself a slave to his voice, as was customary for the comedians. It seems nevertheless, that a little after the death of Cicero, whom Seneca the elder, by what he says himself, might have seen, the Roman orators gave into the most superstitious practices of the actors, in order to preserve their voice. Seneca therefore making mention of Porcius Latro the orator, his school-fellow, friend, and

<sup>a</sup> *Me autem nemo dicendi studiosus Græcorum & tragædorum more voci serviet, qui & annos complures sedentes declamitant, & quotidie antequam pronuncient, vocem cubantes sensim excitant: eandem cum egerint, ab acutissimo sono usque ad gravissimum sonum recolligunt.* CIC. de orat. lib. 1.

countryman, observes as a very rare thing; <sup>a</sup> that this Porcius, who had been brought up in Spain, and was accustomed to a sober and laborious life, such as people at that time continued to lead in the provinces, used no manner of preservative for his voice, but neglected the practice of unfolding it methodically from the highest to the lowest tone, and of folding or turning it in again in the same manner.

Persius speaking of those who prepare themselves for public orations or recitations, ranks among the number of precautions used on those occasions, that of gargling the throat with a kind of composition made for that purpose.

*Grande aliquid, quod pulmo animæ prælargus  
anhelet:*

*Scilicet hæc populo, pexusque, togaque recenti,*

*----- liquido cum plasmate guttur*

*Mobile conlueris.* PERS. sat. I. 11

*All noise, and empty pomp, a storm of words,*

*Lab'ring with sound that little sense affords.*

*They comb, and then they order ev'ry hair:*

*A gown, or white, or scour'd to whiteness,  
wear.*

*A birth-day jewel bobbing at their ear.*

<sup>a</sup> Nil vocis causa facere, non illam per gradus paulatim ab imo usque ad summum perducere, non rursus a summa contentione paribus intervallis descendere, non sudorem unctione discutere. SENEC. Contr. l. 1.



*Next gargle well their throats, and thus prepar'd  
They mount, a God's name, to be seen and hear'd.*

DRYDEN.

Aristotle says <sup>a</sup> the very same thing as Cicero in relation to the care which the actors, and those who sung in chorus, had to preserve their voice. We learn also from Apuleius <sup>b</sup>, that the actors declaimed every day, to the end their organs might not, in a manner, grow rusty.

The writings of the ancients abound with facts which shew, that their attention in relation to whatever might strengthen or improve the voice, was carried even to a degree of superstition. We find by the third chapter of the eleventh book of Quintilian's institutes, that with regard to all kinds of eloquence, the ancients made a profound study of the nature of the human voice, and of all the proper methods for strengthening it. The art of teaching how to strengthen and manage the voice was become a particular profession. Pliny points out in several parts of his history, no less than twenty plants, which were reckoned specifics for that purpose. The care of preserving the voice was become one of the most serious occupations of those who spoke or recited in public. I shall cite here only the

<sup>a</sup> ARISTOT. Prob. I. 10.

<sup>b</sup> *Desuetudo omnibus pigrum, pigrum veterum parit. Tragædi adeo ni quotidie proclamant, claritudo arteriis obsolescit. Igitur identidem boando purgant ravim.* APUL. FLOR. lib. 2.

example of Nero, that theatrical man whom the Gods thought proper to intrust with the government of the world. Pliny relates,<sup>a</sup> that this prince was the inventor of a new method of strengthening the voice, which consisted in declaiming as loud as possible with a leaden plate upon his breast. Suetonius adds<sup>b</sup> some curious particulars to Pliny's relation. After mentioning the regimen they observed, and the precautions used in order to improve and preserve the voice, he informs us that Nero, upon his return from Greece, was so extremely careful, as to make use of several particular drugs for this very purpose. And that he might spare his voice as much as possible, whenever he mustered his troops, he declined calling each soldier by his name according to the custom of the Romans; but ordered their names to be called over by one of those domestics whom the Romans kept near their persons, to speak for them when there was occasion to raise the voice very high in or-

<sup>a</sup> *Nero, quoniam ita Diis placuit, princeps, lamina pectori imposita, sub ea cantica exclamans alendis vocibus demonstravit rationem.* PLIN. hist. lib. 39. cap. 3.

<sup>b</sup> *Nec eorum quidquam omittere quæ generis ejus artifices, vel conservandæ vocis causâ vel augendæ facitarent. Sed & plumbeam chartam superius pectore sustinere, & elidere vomituque purgari, & abstinere pomis cibisque officientibus. Ac post hæc tantum absuit à remittendo laxandoque studio, ut conservandæ vocis gratia neque milites unquam nisi alio verba pronunciantes appellaret.* Suet. in NERONE.

der to be heard. Thus we find that theatrical people have been subject in all times to be led away by whimsical notions. But these very fancies of Nero and others of his stamp shew how greatly those arts were valued in which the beauty of the voice is of any advantage.

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## C H A P. XVI.

*Of the Pantomimes, or players who acted without speaking.*

THE ancients, not satisfied with reducing the Hypocritical music or the art of gesticulation into method, carried it to such a degree of perfection, that some comedians attempted to act all sorts of theatrical pieces without speaking. Whatever the Pantomimes wanted to say, they expressed with gestures taught by the art of Saltation. *Is it a reason for Venus to be appeased, says Arnobius <sup>a</sup> in a work written against the pagan superstitions, to see a Pantomime representing Adonis, by making use of such gestures as he learns from the art of dancing?* This shews that the Pantomimes made themselves commonly understood without speaking. *The stage-players, says*

<sup>a</sup> *Obliterabit offensam Venus, si Adonis in habitu gestum agere viderit saltatoriis in motibus Pantomimum?* ARNOB. adv. Gent. 1. 7.

an ancient writer, <sup>a</sup> *explain and set before us an ordinary fable without the assistance of language.*

One would imagine by reading Lucian, <sup>b</sup> that it was customary sometimes to sing the subject executed by the Pantomimes; but 'tis also certain by several passages which I shall presently cite, that they frequently acted, when no body either sung or pronounced the verses of those scenes in which they performed their dumb shew. The name of Pantomime, which signifies an imitator of every thing, was given to those comedians, probably because they imitated and explained all sorts of subjects by gestures. We shall see presently that the Pantomime not only represented sometimes a single personage, as the other comedians; but that he also painted and described by his gesture the action of several personages. For example, if the scene of Mercury and Sofia in the comedy of Amphytrio was sometimes divided between two Pantomimes, so that one actor performed the part of Sofia, and another that of Mercury; the same actor sometimes executed two parts, by acting alternately the personage of Mercury and that of Sofia.

We have already observed that the art of gesture was composed of natural and instituted signs. We may well imagine that the Pantomimes made use of both, as they could not have

<sup>a</sup> *Histriones quasdam in theatro fabulas sine verbis saltando, plerumque aperiunt & exponunt.* AUG. de Magist.

<sup>b</sup> LUCIAN. de Orch.



too many methods of making themselves understood. All the movements therefore of a Pantomime, as St Austin <sup>a</sup> observes, had some signification, and all his gestures were phrases, as it were, to those who had the key.

As the Pantomimes used several gestures of an arbitrary signification, a person must have been at least accustomed to see them, that he might lose nothing of their meaning. In fact St Austin informs us; <sup>b</sup> that when the Pantomimes first began to act on the Carthaginian stage, they were obliged for a long while to have a public crier, to acquaint people with the subject they were going to represent in their dumb shew. *There are old people still living, continues this father, who have assured me that they remember to have seen this practice. Besides we find that those who are not initiated in the mysteries of these spectacles, understand but very little of what the Pantomimes mean, unless the person they sit next to, explains it to them. But use and custom cleared up the*

<sup>a</sup> *Histriones omnium membrorum motibus dant signa quædam scientibus, & cum oculis eorum fabulantur.* S. AUG. de doctr. Chr. lib. 2.

<sup>b</sup> *Primis temporibus saltante Pantomimo, præco pronuntiabat populis Carthaginiis quod saltator vellet intelligi. Quod adhuc multi meminerunt senes quorum relatu hæc solemus audire. Quod ideo credendum est, quia nunc quoque si quis talium nugarum imperitus intraverit, nisi ei dicatur ab altero quid illi motus significent, frustra intentus est.* S. AUG. de doctr. Christ. lib. 2.

meaning of this mute language to those who had not made a methodical study of it, in the same manner as it shews a person the signification of the words of a strange language, of which he understood some terms before; when he lives among people who speak this language. One word he knows helps him to understand another, and so on. When people had a knowledge of this mute language, the gestures they understood helped them to guess at the meaning of the new gestures which in all probability the pantomimes invented from time to time.

A poem of Sidonius Apollinaris, intitled *Narbona*, and addressed to Consentius a citizen of that place, shews that a great many pantomimes executed their parts without speaking a word. Sidonius says here to his friend: “When after  
 “having finished your affairs, you went to un-  
 “bend yourself at the theatre, the comedians  
 “trembled at your presence. It seemed as  
 “if they were going to play before Apollo and  
 “the nine muses. You comprehended immedi-  
 “ately the meaning of what Caramalus and  
 “Phabaton represented without the assistance of  
 “speech, who made themselves understood, as  
 “it were, by a speaking gesture, expressing them-  
 “selves sometimes with a single nod, some-  
 “times with the hand, or by some other mo-  
 “tion of the body. You knew presently whe-  
 “ther it was Jason, Thyestes, or some other  
 “personage they intended to represent.”

*Coram te Caramalus aut Phabaton  
 Clausit faucibus & loquente gestu,  
 Nutu, crure, genu, manu, rotatu, &c.* <sup>a</sup>

Sirmondus, in his notes upon Sidonius Apollinaris, <sup>b</sup> informs us that this Caramalus and Phabaton were two celebrated Pantomimes, of whom mention is made in Aristenæus's letters, and in Leontius. The commentator of Sidonius produces likewise upon this occasion the following old epigram, the author of which is not known.

*Tot linguæ quot membra viro, mirabilis est ars,  
 Quæ facit articulos, ore silente, loqui.*

*All the members of a Pantomime are so many tongues, by means of which he speaks without opening his mouth.*

'Tis easy to conceive how the Pantomimes could contrive to give an intelligible description of an action, and to signify by their gesture the words taken in their proper sense, as the heavens, the earth, a man, &c. But how was it possible for them (some will ask) to express by gestures, words taken in a figurative sense, which occur so frequently in the poetic style?

I shall answer in the first place, that the sense of the phrase conveyed sometimes the meaning of those words taken in a figurative sense. Secondly, Macrobius <sup>c</sup> gives us an idea of the manner the

<sup>a</sup> SIDON Carm. 23. vers. 268.

<sup>b</sup> SIRM. in not. ad SIDON. p. 157.

<sup>c</sup> MACROB. Saturn. 2. cap. 7.

Pantomimes contrived to express those words. He relates that Hilar, the disciple and competitor of Pylades, (who, as we shall see presently, was the first inventor of the Pantomimic art) executed a Monologue after his manner, which ended with these words, *the great Agamemnon*. Hilar, to express them, made all the gestures of a man that wants to measure another who is bigger than himself. Pylades cried out from the pit, *Friend, thou makest thy Agamemnon a big man, but not a great man*. Upon which the people insisted immediately that Pylades should act that very part. Augustus, under whose reign this adventure happened, would rather have the people masters at the theatre than in the *Campus Martius*. They were therefore obeyed; and when Pylades executed the part for which he had publicly censured his eleve, he represented by his gesture and attitude the countenance of a person immersed in deep meditation, to express the character of a great man. It was an easy matter to see he meant by his action, that a man greater than others was he who had profounder thoughts. The emulation was so great between Pylades and Bathyllus another Pantomime, that Augustus, who found himself sometimes embarrassed with their disputes, thought fit to speak to Pylades, and to advise him to live in harmony and friendship with his rival whom Mæcenas protected. Pylades answered, that the best thing that could happen to him, was to see the people



people so busy in relation to Pylades and Bathylus. 'Tis very probable the emperor did not chuse to reply to this answer.

Let us now mention something concerning the persons of the Pantomimes. The author of the treatise against the ancient spectacles, which is to be seen among the works of St Cyprian, defines a Pantomime,<sup>a</sup> *a monster that is neither man nor woman, whose carriage and manners are more lascivious than those of any courtesan, and whose art consists in speaking with his gesture. And yet all the town, he says, runs to see him represent by his gesticulations, the infamous obscenities of fabulous antiquity.* The Romans must have taken it into their heads, that the castration of their Pantomimes preserved a suppleness in their bodies superior to that of other men. This notion or capricious whim made them exercise the same cruelty on their children whom they designed for this profession, as is practised in some countries on young people to prevent their voice (if I may so express myself) from mewing. St Cyprian, in a letter he wrote to Donatus giving an account of the motives of his conversion to the Christian religion, says,<sup>b</sup> that the public shows which con-

<sup>a</sup> *Huic dedecori condignum dedecus superinducitur, homo fractus omnibus membris, & vir ultra muliebre[m] molliem dissolutus, cui ars est verba manibus expedire; & propter unum nescio quem nec virum nec fœminam, commovetur civitas, ut desalten- tur fabulosæ antiquitatis libidines.*

<sup>b</sup> *Exirantur mares, omnis honor & vigor sexûs enervati corporis dedecore emollitur, plusque illi placet quisquis virum in fœminam magis fregerit.* S. CYP. ep. ad DONAT.

stitute a part of the pagan worship, are full of infamy and barbarity. After mentioning the horrors of the amphitheatre he says of the Pantomimes, that the males are degraded of their sex, to render them fitter for practising so dishonest a trade, and that the master who knows best how to soften a man into a woman is said to make the best disciple. *What pain, says Tertullian, <sup>a</sup> and torture of body is not a Pantomime obliged to endure, in order to be fit for his profession?*

In effect Lucian observes, <sup>b</sup> that nothing was more difficult than to find a proper person to make a Pantomime. After speaking of his size, suppleness, activity and air, he adds, that 'tis as easy to find a countenance both soft and majestic at the same time. He says afterwards, that this actor must be taught music, history, and several other things proper for a man of letters.

We read in Zozimus and Suidas, <sup>c</sup> that the Pantomimic art had its rise at Rome under the emperor Augustus; which made Lucian say that Socrates <sup>d</sup> had seen the art of *dancing* when it was but just in its cradle. Zozimus reckons even the invention of this art among the causes of the corrupt manners of

<sup>a</sup> TERTUL. contra Spectac.

<sup>b</sup> LUCIAN de Orchesi.

<sup>c</sup> Zoz. hist. lib. 1.

<sup>d</sup> LUCIAN de Orchesi.

the Roman people, and of the misfortunes of the empire. In fact, the Romans, as we shall see presently, grew extravagantly fond of this spectacle.

The two first inventers of this new art were Pylades and Bathyllus, who have rendered their names as famous in the Roman history, as that of the founder of any institution among the moderns. Pylades borrowed his gesticulation from the three collections already spoken of, which were used in tragedy, comedy, and the dramatic poem distinguished by the name of Satyre. As for the proper gesticulation of the Pantomimes, he gave it the appellation of *Italica*. Thus after Pylades there were four collections of theatrical gestures: The *Emmelia* used in tragedy; the *Cordax* in comedy; the *Sicinnis* in satyre; and the *Italica* in pieces executed by Pantomimes. M. Calliachy a native of Candia, who died about the year 1708, professor of Belles Lettres in the university of Padua, pretends that the Pantomimic art was more ancient than Augustus. But he produces no solid proof of his opinion; for he mistakes the arbitrary art of expressing a few passions, an art which Livy calls *imitandorum carminum actum*, and was certainly older than Augustus; he mistakes it, I say, for the Panto-

<sup>a</sup> De ludis scen. cap. 9, & 10.

<sup>b</sup> TIT. LIV. lib. 7.

mimic art, which consisted in reciting a whole play or a scene without speaking. We shall produce hereafter a passage of Seneca the elder, who might have seen Pylades and Bathyllus, where he says that Pylades surpassed Bathyllus in tragic subjects; but that in comic ones Bathyllus's action was much superior to that of Pylades. Athenæus gives us the same idea of these two Pantomimes; and we find the same remark in a great number of ancient writers.

To signify that the Pantomimes acted a piece, it was usual to say, *they danced it, fabulam saltabant*; the reasons of which we have already given. In these representations they made use of flutes of a particular kind, which were called *Tibiæ Dactilicæ*.<sup>a</sup> Very likely the sound of this flute made a better imitation of the human voice, after the manner it is imitated by the German flute. It was fitter for playing the subject; that is, in my opinion, the noted modulation of the verses, or the declamation which was to be recited in ordinary representations. For we find by a passage of Cassiodorus<sup>b</sup> already cited, that the flute called *Dactilicæ* was accompanied by other instruments which probably served for a thorough bass to the modulation.

What seems very surprizing, is, that those comedians who undertook to play without

<sup>a</sup> ONOM. POLL. lib. 4. cap. 10.

<sup>b</sup> CASSIODORUS, ep. 51. l. 4.



speaking, could not make use of the motions of the face in their declamation. They had expression enough, and to spare; and yet 'tis certain they played with masks, in the same manner as the other comedians. Lucian says in his treatise of dancing, that the Pantomimic mask had not a wide mouth, like those of common comedians, but was much handsomer. Macrobius relates, <sup>a</sup> that Pylades was vexed one day when he was acting the character of *Hercules Furens*, because the spectators complained that his gesticulation was extravagant. Upon which he took off his mask, and cried out to them, *Don't you know, ye fools, that I am acting the part of a greater fool than your selves?* This very author gives us in the same passage several other ingenious fallies of that celebrated founder of the Pantomimes.

Very likely, these comedians began first with executing after their way, those scenes of tragedy and comedy, that were called *Cantica*. I ground this conjecture on two reasons. The first is, that the ancient writers, who lived before Apuleius, make no mention, as far as I can remember, of dramatic pieces executed by a company of Pantomimes. They take notice only of monologues or cantics *danced* by those dumb comedians. We find even in the abovementioned work of Lucian, that a stranger seeing five habits prepared for the same Pantomime, who was

<sup>a</sup> MACROB. SATURN. lib. 2. cap. 7.

to act successively five different parts, asked whether the same person was to wear them all five. There would have been no room, methinks, to ask this question, if there had been companies of Pantomimes at that time. My second reason is, that in all probability the thing must have happened in the following manner. No doubt the first Pantomimes endeavoured to make themselves understood, in order to be agreeable to the spectators; for which reason they must have begun with executing the most entertaining scenes of the principal dramatic pieces, as these were likely to be easiest understood. If a company of Pantomimes were to be formed at Paris, 'tis to be supposed they would set out with the finest scenes of the *Cid* and other celebrated pieces, by chusing those in which the action requires the comedian to put himself in many singular attitudes, and to perform several remarkable gesticulations, such as may be easily distinguished when seen, without hearing the discourse which they naturally accompany. They would begin, for example, with representing the scene between Mercury and Sosia in the first act of *Amphytrion*. Were they to execute any part of our operas, they would set out with the last scene of the fourth act of *Rowland*, where this hero grows mad.

Perhaps it was in Lucian's time that intire companies of Pantomimes were first formed, and began to act regular pieces. Apuleius, who might have seen Lucian, gives us a very exact

account of the representation of the judgment of Paris, performed by a company of Pantomimes. We see in this curious recital <sup>a</sup> that Juno, Pallas, and Venus spoke one after another to Paris, and promised him what every body knows, explaining themselves with gesticulations and signs accompanied with instruments. Apuleius remarks several times that they made themselves understood by gesticulations, *nutibus*, or *gestibus*. Each Goddess had also her particular retinue which consisted of several actors.

As the Pantomimes were excused from speaking, and their whole business was to gesticulate; 'tis plain their gesticulation must have been livelier, and their action much more animated than that of the ordinary comedians. The latter could give only a part of their attention and force to the gesticulation in the dialogues, because they spoke themselves; and in the monologues where they were silent, they were obliged to make their

<sup>a</sup> *Hæc puella (Juno) varios modulos concinente tibia, præ cæteris quietâ & inaffectatâ gesticulatione, nutibus honestis pastori pollicetur, si sibi præmium decoris addixisset, & sese regnum totius Asiæ tributuram. Hæc (Minerva) inquieto capite & oculis in aspectum minacibus citato & intorto genere gesticulationis alacër, demonstrabat Paridi, si sibi formæ victoriam tradidisset, sortem trophæisque bellicis inclytum suis adminiculis fuurum. (Venus) sensim annutante capite cæpit incedere, mollique tibiarum sono, delicatis respondere gestibus & nonnunquam saltare. solis oculis. Hæc ut primum ante conspectum judicis facta est, nîsu brachiorum polliceri videbatur, &c. APUL. Met. l. 10.*

dumb shew agree with the recitation of the person who spoke in their stead. On the contrary, the Pantomime was intire master of his action, and his only care was to render his expression intelligible. Wherefore Cassiodorus, after speaking of the tragedies and comedies that were represented on the stage, <sup>a</sup> calls the Pantomimes, *men whose eloquent hands had a tongue, as it were, on the tip of each finger: Men who spoke while they were silent, and who knew how to make an intire recital without opening their mouths: Men, in fine, whom Polyhymnia, the Muse who presided over music, had formed, in order to shew, that there was no necessity for articulating in order to convey our thoughts.* 'Tis thus this author explains himself in a letter written in the name of Theodoric king of the Ostrogoths, to Symmachus governor of Rome, desiring him to repair the theatre of Pompey at that prince's expence.

If we can give credit to Martial and some other poets, the Pantomimes made a prodigious impression on the spectators. Every body knows these verses of Juvenal.

*Chironomum Lædam molli saltante Bathyllo  
Tuccia, &c.*

<sup>a</sup> *Orchestarum loquacissimæ manus, linguosi digiti, silentium clamor, expositio tacita, quam Musa Polyhymnia reperisse narratur, ostendens homines posse sine oris afflatu velle suum declarare.* CASSIOD. var. ep. lib. 4. ep. 51.



But most of these passages are such as decency will not permit us to cite even in Latin. Besides, poets are suspected of exaggeration; we shall therefore be satisfied with quoting prose writers.

Seneca the elder, who followed one of the gravest professions of his time, confesses that his taste for Pantomimic representations was a real passion. *And to come to my folly*, says this philosopher<sup>a</sup> speaking of the difficulty there is to succeed in several professions, *Pylades was no more the same actor in comedy, nor Bathyllus in tragedy*. Lucian says, that the spectators wept at the representations of the Pantomimes, in the same manner as at those of other comedians.

The Pantomimic art would find a greater difficulty to succeed among the northern nations of Europe, whose natural action is neither eloquent, nor distinct enough to be easily understood, when we see it without hearing the discourse it should naturally accompany. The copy is always less animated than the original. But I have already observed that conversations of all kinds are fuller of external signs, and more speaking, as it were, to the eye, in Italy than in our country. When a Roman thinks proper to quit the studied gravity of his carriage, and gives way for a while to his natural vivacity, he abounds in gesticulations and signs, that have as expressive

<sup>a</sup> *Et ut ad morbum te meum vocem; Pylades in comœdia, Bathyllus in tragœdia multam à se aberant.* SENEC. in contr. 2.

a signification as intire phrases. His action renders many things intelligible of which ours could not give the least conjecture or idea; and his gesticulations are so expressive and distinct, that 'tis very easy to know them when we see them again. A Roman who has a mind to speak to his friend of some secret and important affair, is not satisfied with getting out of the way of being heard; he has even the precaution to avoid being seen, from a very just apprehension that his gesticulations and the motions of his face would give some conjectural notion of what he is going to say.

'Tis observable that the same vivacity of spirit and fire of imagination, which by a natural motion throws people into those animated, varied, expressive, and characterised gesticulations, gives them a facility to understand the gestures and external signs of others: For 'tis very natural for us to comprehend a language we speak. But the language of the Grand Signor's mutes, which is so easily understood by their countrymen, as to seem an articulate language, would appear like a confused buzzing to the inhabitants of the North of Europe. Let us add to these remarks a very common reflexion, which is, that there are some nations who have a greater sensibility in their natural disposition than others; and we shall find it no such difficult matter to believe that the dumb comedians made a very sensible impression on the Greeks and Romans, whose natural action they imitated.

I shall

I shall alledge as a kind of proof of what I have now advanced, a book written by an Italian author, Giovanni Bonifacio, and intitled, *L'arte de' cenni*, or the art of expressing ourselves by signs. We do not find in reading this work, that the author knew that the ancient Pantomimes made themselves understood without speaking; and yet he thought the thing possible. This set him upon composing a volume *in quarto* of upwards of six hundred pages, divided into two parts. In the first he teaches the method of expressing one's thoughts by signs and gestures; and in the second, he shews the utility of this dumb language. This book was printed at Vicenza in 1616. <sup>a</sup> But 'tis time to return to the ancient authors who speak of the success the Pantomimes met with in their representations.

Lucian <sup>b</sup> declares himself a zealous partisan of these dumb comedians, and we find he took a pleasure in relating such facts as might be an honor to their profession. Among other things he says that a Cynic philosopher treated their art as a childish amusement, and defined it a collection of gesticulations which the music and decorations rendered barely tolerable. But a Pantomime of Nero's court, willing to shew this philosopher he was in the wrong, executed before him the amours of Mars and Venus in a dumb declamation, and without any instruments to accompany him. Upon which the Cy-

<sup>a</sup> By GROSSI. <sup>b</sup> LUCIAN, in *Orchesi*.

nic was obliged to acknowledge these comedians to be masters of a real art. The same author relates, that a king, whose dominions bordered upon the Euxine sea, happening to be at Rome under the reign of Nero, begged of that prince very earnestly to let him have a Pantomime he had seen act, that he might make him his general interpreter in all languages. *This fellow,* said he, *will make all the world understand him; whereas I am obliged to have I don't know how many interpreters, in order to keep up a correspondence with my neighbours, who speak a great many different languages which I do not understand.*

As we have not seen any of the representations of the Pantomimes, we are as little capable of deciding of the merit of their art, as of the merit of dividing the declamation between two actors. Those however who are diverted with seeing the Italian comedy, and especially who have seen old Octavius, Scaramouche, and their companions Harlequin and Trivelin, seem to be convinced that several scenes may be executed very well without speaking. But we can alledge facts which will evince better than all our argumentations the possibility of this execution. There have been companies of Pantomimes raised in England; and some of those comedians have acted even at Paris dumb scenes which every body understood. Tho' Roger did not open his mouth, yet it was easy to understand what he meant. What was Roger's prenticeship



ship in comparison to that of the ancient Pantomimes? Did he even so much as know that there had been a Pylades and a Bathyllus?

'Tis now twenty years since a princess, remarkable for her great talents, learning, and taste for the public spectacles, had a mind to see an essay of the art of the ancient Pantomimes, in order to acquire a clearer idea of their representations than that which she had conceived by reading. For want of actors practised in this art, she pitched upon a man, and a woman dancer, both of a superior genius in their profession, and in short, extremely capable of inventing. They were desired therefore to represent only with gesticulations at the theatre *de Sceaux*, the scene of the fourth act of the *Horatii* of *Cornille*, in which the young *Horatius* kills his sister *Gamilla*. Accordingly they executed it, accompanied with several instruments which played a piece of music, composed by a very able master<sup>a</sup>, and adapted to the words of this scene. Our two new Pantomimes animated one another to such a degree by their gesticulations and movements, that at length they shed tears; and we may easily suppose what impression they made upon the spectators. We know also that the Chinese have comedians who, like the Pantomimes, act without speaking; and that they are passionately fond of them. What are the Persian dances but Pantomimic scenes?

M. MOURET.

'Tis

'Tis however certain, that this art charmed the Romans from its first origin, that it soon spread to the very remotest provinces, and subsisted as long as that illustrious empire. The history of the Roman emperors makes mention oftener of famous Pantomimes than of celebrated comedians. The Romans were passionately fond of spectacles, as appears from the treatise of music among the works of Plutarch; *Those*, says he, *who apply themselves to music, prefer that of the theatre for pleasing*: and of all spectacles they liked the Pantomimic representations the best.

We have seen that this art had its rise under Augustus: this prince was vastly delighted with it, and Mæcenas was quite enchanted with Bathyllus. In the very commencement of the reign of Tiberius, the senate was obliged to publish an order <sup>a</sup> forbidding the senators to frequent the schools of Pantomimes, and the Roman Knights to wait upon them thro' the streets. This ordinance was not made without necessity.

Some years after they were obliged to banish these dumb players from Rome. <sup>b</sup> The violent passion the people had for these representations, gave rise to parties and cabals in favor of different Pantomimes, and these cabals turned into factions. We even find by a letter of Cassiodorus, <sup>c</sup> that

<sup>a</sup> *Ne domos Pantomimorum senator introiret, ne egredientes in publicum equites Romani cingerent.* TAC. ann. lib. 1.

<sup>b</sup> Id. *ibid.* l. 1.

<sup>c</sup> CASSIOD. *var. ep. lib. 1. ep. 20.*

these comedians took different liveries, in imitation of the charioteers in the Circensian shows. Some wore blue; others green, &c. The people therefore were divided on their account, and all the factions of the Circus, so frequently mentioned in the Roman history, espoused the companies of Pantomimes. These factions were sometimes as violently animated against one another, as the Guélphs and Gibellines under the emperors of Germany. They were obliged at length to banish them from Rome; a melancholy but necessary expédient for a government, which studied nothing but to amuse the people, by supplying them with bread, and entertaining them with spectacles.

Seneca, the preceptor of Nero, complains, that several philosophical schools were abolished and that the very names of their founders were forgotten; while the memory of none of the celebrated Pantomimes was extinguished. *The schools, says he, of Pylades and Bathyllus subsist under the direction of their élèves, whose succession has not been yet interrupted. The city of Rome swarms with professors of this art, who are never in want of disciples. They find theatres in every*

*At quanta cum cura laboratur ne alicujus Pantomimi nomen intercidat. Stant per successores Pyladis & Bathylli domus. Harum artium multi discipuli sunt, multique doctores. Privatim urbe tota sonat pulpitum. Mares uxoresque contendunt, uter delatus illis. SENEC. nat. quæst. l. 7. cap. 32.*

*house;*

house ; and the husband and wife dispute who shall be most subject to them.

The affected ambiguity which appears in the last words of this passage in the original, is removed by what Tertullian <sup>a</sup> observes concerning the boundless passion both men and women had in those days for the Pantomimes. To this we may add what Galen says in his prognostics ; that being sent for to a woman of quality who was seized with an extraordinary kind of distemper, he discovered by the alterations that appeared in the Lady's countenance whenever the name of a certain Pantomime happened to be mentioned in her presence, that her sickness was intirely owing to the passion she had conceived for him, and the violent efforts she used to conceal it.

The Pantomimes were likewise expelled the city of Rome under Nero and other emperors ; but their exile, as we have already observed, did not last long, because the people could not do without them ; and besides there happened some conjunctures in which the prince thinking he stood in need of the favor of the multitude, endeavored by popular actions to conciliate their affection. For example, they had been banished by Domitian ; and yet Nerva his successor recalled them, tho' he was one of

<sup>a</sup> *Quibus viri animas, fœminæ aut illi etiam corpora sua substernunt.* TERTUL. de spectac.



the soberest and wisest of princes. We find likewise by a letter of Pliny to Trajan, <sup>a</sup> that the people themselves grown tired with the disorders occasioned by the Pantomimes, petitioned sometimes for their expulsion as eagerly as at other times they insisted upon their return.

Some modern writers suppose, that Nero expelled all sorts of players out of Rome, because Tacitus, relating the expulsion of the Pantomimes, makes use of a general expression applicable to all those who acted upon the stage. *He banished all the HISTRIONES*, says Tacitus, <sup>b</sup> *out of Italy; being the only method to prevent the tumults which arose at the theatre.* But we can prove, that none but the Pantomimes were expelled at that time, and that Tacitus, thro' a negligence excusable on such an occasion, has put the name of the genus instead of the species. My first argument is, that Tacitus immediately after the word above cited, adds a circumstance which shews that Nero did not shut up the theatres. He ordered, says this historian, <sup>c</sup> that for the future the soldiers should mount guard at the play-house, pursuant to the ancient custom. Here 'tis to be observed that Nero had removed this guard

<sup>a</sup> *Neque à te minare concentu ut tolleres Pantomimos, quàm à patre tuo ut restitueret exactum est.* PLIN. ep. ad TRAJ.

<sup>b</sup> *Non aliud remedium repertum est, quàm ut histriones Italia pellerentur.* TAC. Annal. lib. 13.

<sup>c</sup> *Milesque theatro rursus affideret.* Id. ib.

for some time, in order to appear more popular. The second is, that the same writer mentioning the return of these *Histriones*, whose expulsion he before related, gives them the name of Pantomimes.

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## C H A P. XVII.

*At what time the sumptuous representations of the ancients ceased. Of the excellence of their music.*

THE Pantomimic art, as well as that of comedians who executed the declamation in two parts; and that of the composers of declamation; in a word, several of the subordinate arts to the science of music, perished in all probability, when the sumptuous representations, which had given rise to the greatest part of the musical arts, and supported those who professed them, were dropt at the theatre of Marcellus, and at several other great theatres capable of holding many thousands of spectators. But at what time precisely those magnificent theatres were abandoned, whose immense bulk was the occasion of introducing so many ingenious inventions in the representation of dramatic pieces;

*a Redditi quanquam scenæ Pantomimi certaminibus sacris prohibebantur. Id. lib. 14.*

is a question which we shall endeavour here to determine.

We find in St Austin's works, who died in the year 413, that as early as his time they began to shut up the theatres in most of the cities of the Roman empire. The inundation of barbarous nations who spread themselves throughout the empire, deprived the inhabitants of the ravaged provinces of the necessary supplies for supporting the expence of those spectacles. *Unless*, says this father<sup>a</sup>, in relation to the situation of the empire in his days; *the badness of the times is owing to the shutting up of the theatres*. But it appears on the other hand by several letters of Cassiodorus, which have been already quoted and were written about the year 520, that the theatres were open at Rome an intire century after the time mentioned by St Austin. Either the great theatres of this capital had not been shut, or else they must have been opened again. 'Tis highly probable therefore the theatrical entertainments were not intirely dropt, 'till Rome was taken and plundered by Totila<sup>b</sup>. This sacking of that city, which surpassed in its circumstances all the preceding ones in cruelty; and obliged Patrician ladies to beg before their own doors, occupied by barbarian masters, is the real epoch of the almost total extinction of learning and arts. The great artists indeed had disappeared

<sup>a</sup> *Nisi fortè hinc sint tempora mala, quia per omnes civitates cadunt theatra.* AUG. de con. sen. lib. 1. cap. 33.

<sup>b</sup> In 546.

before this, but it was not 'till now that the arts themselves disappeared. All the new disasters which followed the sacking of Rome by Totila, dried, as it were, those plants, which he had plucked up by the root.

Such was the fate of the ancient theatres in the western empire. Those men who are born more industrious than laborious, and who chuse to subsist by an easy occupation, being incapable to live any longer on the profits of the stage, either perished with hunger, or took up with some other employment; and persons of the same turn of mind who succeeded them, exercised their abilities in other professions.

I shall break in here for a few lines upon the thread of my discourse, to explain in what sense I said, that the theatres, in all probability, were shut up at Rome, when this city was pillaged by Totila. I meant only that the theatre of Marcellus and the other magnificent theatres were destroyed, or rendered unserviceable by the damage they had sustained, and that the sumptuous representations of those places dropped; but I did not pretend to say, that all representations of comedies ceased. On the contrary, I am of opinion, that as soon as the serenity of the times was a little restored, they began to act theatrical pieces, but without the ancient decorations, at Rome, and in the other great cities, which had shared the same fate as this capital of the empire. By a common revolution of human affairs, the Scenic decorations that were so sumptuous in the twelfth



century of the foundation of Rome, were become in the thirteenth of the same æra, as plain and as simple as in the commencement of the fifth. The stage reverted therefore to its primitive simplicity under Livius Andronicus.

We have a very strong proof in the Capitularies of our kings of the second race, to shew that in their times there were profest comedians who represented theatrical pieces. This is, their renewing the law of the Theodosian Code, which forbids all kind of profaneness upon the stage. *We condemn, say the Capitularies, to a bodily punishment and to banishment, all those comedians, who shall presume to appear on the stage, dressed in the habit of priests, and religious men or women, or of any ecclesiastical person.*

Comedians should at all times, of their own accord, avoid falling into any profaneness and immorality of this nature. Yet our Charles IX was also obliged to forbid it by an edict published in 1561, upon the complaints and representations of the states of the kingdom assembled at Orleans. The twenty fourth article of this edict says: *We strictly forbid all players of farces, mountebanks, and such-like persons, to play on Sundays and festivals during the time of Divine service, to appear*

*Si quis ex scenicis vestem sacerdotalem aut monasticam, vel mulieris religiosæ, vel quâlicunque ecclesiastico statu similem indutus fuerit, corporali pœnâ subsistat, & exilio tradatur. BULUS. capitul. tom. 1. p. 906.*

*addressed in ecclesiastic habits, or to act immoral and dissolute pieces, under penalty of imprisonment and bodily punishment.* What shews that this law was not exactly observed, is, that it was renewed by an edict, which Henry III published upon the remonstrances of the states assembled at Blois in 1576. One would hardly believe that those wise and salutary laws were not put in practice. I shall give the reader an extract relating to this subject from a book intitled, *Most humble remonstrances to Henry III of that name, King of France and of Poland*, printed in the year 1588, at the convocation of the states commonly called, *the second assembly of the states at Blois*, because they met a second time in this city.

*There is another great evil committed and tolerated principally in your city of Paris on Sundays and festivals, which is more prejudicial than any other to the honor of God and the sanctification of his feasts, and so pregnant with horrid abuses, that we, in conjunction with the sagest of your realm, think it sufficient to draw God's malediction on you and your kingdom, especially on the said city of Paris, where this wickedness prevails more than in any other part. This is the representing of plays and public spectacles on Sundays and festivals, by Italians as well as Frenchmen; especially those that are acted in a sewer and house of Satan called the HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE, by such as very improperly call themselves fellow-members of the passion of Jesus Christ. In this place they make a thousand scandalous appointments to the*

prejudice of the honor and chastity of women, and to the ruin of poor tradesmen's families, who fill the lower hall, and for upwards of two hours before the play begins spend their time in unchast discourses, in playing at dice, and in public gluttony and drunkenness, from whence several quarrels and bruising arise. On the scaffold they raise altars decked with crosses and ecclesiastic ornaments; and exhibit priests dressed in surplices, even in immodest farces, in order to perform ridiculous marriages. They read the Gospel in an ecclesiastic tone, to find occasionally some word to sport with: and besides there is not one of their farces, but what is filthy, and obscene, to the great scandal of the youth that go to see them. But this is digressing too far from our subject, let us return to the theatres which subsisted at Rome, before it was laid waste by the Barbarians.

We find by a passage of Ammianus Marcellinus, that the number of persons supported at Rome in his time by the theatrical arts, was prodigious. This historian relates <sup>a</sup> with indignation, "That Rome being menaced with a fa-  
"mine, they had the precaution to turn out

<sup>a</sup> *Postremo ad id indignitatis est ventum, ut cum peregrinorum formidatam non ita dudum alimentorum inopiam pellerentur ab urbe præcípites; sectatoribus disciplinarum liberalium impendio, paucis sine respiratione ulla extrusis, tenerentur mimarum asseclæ veri, quique id simularunt ad tempus, & tria millia saltatricum ne interpellata quidem, cum choris totidemque remanerent magistris.* AMM. MARCELL. hist. lib. 14.



“ all strangers, even those who professed the  
 “ liberal arts. But while they expelled the  
 “ learned, as useless mouths, and even allowed  
 “ them but a very short time to quit the city,  
 “ there was not a word said to theatrical persons,  
 “ or to those who sheltered themselves under  
 “ this glorious title. They permitted therefore  
 “ three thousand *women-dancers* to remain very  
 “ quietly in Rome, and as many more men who  
 “ acted in the chorus’s, or were professors of the  
 “ musical arts.” We may judge by this recital  
 what a surprizing number of theatrical people  
 there must have been at Rome under Dioclesian  
 and Constantine the Great. Since there was so  
 great a number of persons who professed the musi-  
 cal arts, no wonder the ancients had so many meth-  
 ods and practices relating to the science of Mu-  
 sic, which we have not. ’Tis the multitude of  
 artists who profess a particular art, that gives it  
 an extent, and is the cause of its being subdivid-  
 ed into several subordinate branches.

The science of music indeed subsisted after the  
 theatres were shut, but most of the musical arts  
 intirely perished. I do not even know that we  
 have any one monument left of the Rhythmical,  
 Organical, Hypocritical, or Metrical Music. We  
 find the rules of the Poetic Music in the verses  
 of the ancients, and some of their Melopœiæ, me-  
 thinks, have been preserved in the chant used in  
 Divine service.

Among the answers to some questions of the  
 Christians, a work attributed to Justin martyr,



who lived in the second century, we meet with one which decides <sup>a</sup> that the faithful may use in singing the praises of God, the airs composed by Pagans for profane uses, provided this music be executed with proper modesty and decorum. This passage is explained by what St Austin says in a discourse on the anniversary of St Cyprian's martyrdom. *'Tis not long ago, says he, <sup>b</sup> since DANCERS presumed to practise their art in this venerable place, even over the tomb of our sacred martyr. They sung profane songs here all night long, while others declaimed with gesticulations.* The circumstances of time and place shew plainly that this passage must be understood of Christians. 'Tis therefore very probable that some Christian had wrote St Cyprian's passion in verse, and that this poem was executed over his tomb in the same manner as profane pieces were acted at the theatre. It follows therefore that when Justin allows the airs composed by pagans to be sung in churches, he is not for having them declaimed, but only for their being sung without any gesticulation.

Be this as it will, the church office contains several hymns composed before the sacking of Rome by Totila. Hymns were made for singing, pur-

<sup>a</sup> QUÆST. 107.

<sup>b</sup> *Aliquando ante annos non valde multos etiam istum locum invaserat petulantia saltatorum, istum tam sanctum locum ubi jacet tam sancti martyris corpus. Per totam noctem canebantur hic nefaria & canentibus saltabatur. AUG. serm. 311. in natali D. CYPRIANI.*

suant to the saying of Isidorus <sup>2</sup> *If it is not sung, 'tis not a hymn.* Now as the music of these hymns is the same in all the offices, 'tis reasonable to imagine this music was composed when first the hymns were made. Let us proceed with this subject.

The Ambrosian office which is still sung in several churches, was composed or regulated by this saint, who died a hundred and fifty years before the pillaging of Rome by Totila. When this event happened, St Gregory the Great, the same who composed or regulated the Gregorian office or song, which still obtains in a great number of Catholic churches, was already born. These saints did not create a new music for their offices when they reduced them to a proper regulation: for it appears by the manner in which cotemporary writers explain themselves concerning this subject, that they admire several songs in the church, which had been made use of for some time. But all these songs, whether composed before St Gregory, or made in his time, are capable of giving us an idea of the excellence of the ancient music. If the profane songs composed within fourscore years should happen to be lost a thousand years hence, and the ecclesiastic songs made within the very same time, should be preserved, would it not be possible then to form an idea of the beauty of our profane songs from that of our church music?

2 *Si non cantatur, non est hymnus.* ISID.

Tho'

Tho' the character of these songs be different, do we not discover the author of the Armida in Lulli's *Dies Iræ*? Certain it is, that all connoisseurs admire the beauty of the *Preface*, and several other songs of the Gregorian office, tho', as we have already observed in the beginning of this third part, it does not deviate so much from natural declamation, as our musical singing.

I return now to what has been the cause of so many discussions, I mean the practice which formerly obtained of composing and writing the declamation with notes.

## C H A P. XVIII.

*Reflections on the advantages and inconveniences arising from the composed declamation of the ancients.*

TWO reasons determine me to believe that the practice here in question was attended with more advantage than inconvenience, and that experience made the ancients prefer the composed to the arbitrary declamation. First the ancient practice prevented the players from falling into those wrong constructions or meanings, which men of the very best abilities are apt sometimes to give to verses they recite without thoroughly understanding them. Secondly, a skilful composer of declamation oftentimes suggested expressions and beauties

beauties to comedians, which they were incapable to find of themselves. They were not all so *learned* as Roscius, the epithet bestowed upon him by Horace.

'Tis known with what success Chanméslé recited the part of Phædra, the declamation of which she had learnt verse by verse from Racine. Boileau thought proper to take notice of it, and even our stage has preserved some vestiges or remains of this declamation which might be committed to writing, had we but proper characters; so true it is, that a good thing shews itself without difficulty in such productions as we can judge of by sense, and is not forgotten, though we never think of committing it to memory.

In fine, were a tragedy to have its declamation written in notes, it would have the same merit as an opera; that is, very indifferent actors might execute it tolerably. They could not commit the tenth part of the faults they are liable to, either in mistaking the tones, and consequently the action suitable to the verses they recite, or in affecting the pathetic in several parts that will not admit of it. This is what happens every day on our modern stages, where the comedians (some of whom have not even studied their art) compose an arbitrary declamation of their part, without so much as understanding several of the verses.

Secondly, were every player as capable of composing the declamation of a tragedy, as a master of the art, it would be still true that the declamation



declamation composed from one end of the play to the other by the same person, must be better managed and conducted than a declamation in which each actor recites his part according to his own fancy. This arbitrary declamation would have frequently thrown Roscius out of measure. By a much stronger reason it must disconcert some of our comedians, who for want of having studied the diversity, intervals, and (if I may say so) the sympathy of tones, know not how to get rid of the perplexity in which they are involved thro' a disagreement in their parts. Now it is as easy to make a concert of different parts that are to be alternately recited, by reducing the declamation into writing, as it is difficult to reduce it, when it has not been marked on paper.

Thus we see that our players, great numbers of whom have no other guides but rote and instinct, know not how to extricate themselves, when the actor who recites with them, does not conclude with such a tone, as may permit them to begin with the very tone for which they are prepared, as much by habit as reflection. Hence it is, that they charge one another so frequently with reciting in vicious tones, and principally with finishing their *couplets* wrong, so as to perplex, say they, the person who is to speak when they have done. These inconveniences did not happen when the declamation was noted, or at least they could never happen but as they do at the opera, when an actor does not sing true. That is to say, the fault was owing to the artist and not to the art,

art, which had sufficiently provided against this inconveniency.

The spectators and actors of our times are so much the more to be pitied, as the former are as sensibly affected with the faults of the latter, as if the art of declamation existed still the same it was formerly in the time of Quintilian; tho' the actors can no longer receive any benefit or assistance from this art, which is utterly lost.

Arts are nothing more than methods regulated by certain principles; and upon examining these principles we find them to be maxims formed in consequence of many observations made on the effects of nature. Now nature produces constantly its effects, pursuant to the rules prescribed to her. In things therefore that fall under our senses, the effects of nature produce always the same agreeable or disagreeable sensations, whether we observe or not how the thing happens; whether we trouble ourselves with tracing these effects to their causes, or are satisfied with enjoying them; whether in fine we reduce to any fixt method the art of managing the natural causes pursuant to rules, or follow only our instinct in the application of these causes.

We are sensible therefore of the faults our comedians commit, tho' we are unacquainted with the art which shews how to avoid them. We see even in Cicero, that among those who hissed at the actors in his time when they were mistaken in their measure, there was but a very small number

ber

ber of persons who understood the art, and could tell precisely in what the error consisted. Most of them discovered the mistake only by means of the senses. *How few are there, says Cicero, in a multitude of spectators, that are thoroughly versed in the science of music? And yet as soon as an actor is mistaken in his measure, either by lengthning or shortning too much a syllable, he is immediately hissed at by the whole house.*

But (some will say) we have several very knowing comedians in their art, who in composing the declamation of their own part, may by their superior abilities imbellish it with several beauties and graces, which another is not master of. Secondly, (it will be still objected) a composed declamation must strip those actors who submit to it, of their fire and enthusiasm. Their action cannot be natural, but must appear at least languid and heavy. The ancient practice therefore puts an excellent player upon a level with an indifferent one.

I answer to the first objection. True it is, that this practice made the spectators lose some beauties in a part declaimed by an excellent comedian. For example, if the actress who plays the part of Paulina in Polieuctes, were obliged to follow a declamation noted by another person, this subjection would hinder her from throwing some beauties, of which she is mistress, into particular parts

<sup>2</sup> *Quotusquisque est qui teneat artem numerorum ac modorum? At in his si paululum modo offensum est, ut aut contractione brevius fieret, aut productione longius, theatra tota reclamant.*  
Cic. de orat. lib. 3.



of her declamation. But this very actress (to make use of the same example) would play equally well the intire part of Paulina, were this part composed and noted. On the other hand, what an advantage would it not be to us, if all the parts of Polieuctes were composed? Let us but recollect how the second characters are declaimed by actors who recite them according to their fancy. In fine, as long as it is allowed that there will be always a greater number of indifferent than excellent actors, it must be allowed likewise, that the loss mentioned in the objection would be compensated in such a manner, as we should not fail of being considerable gainers.

To the second objection my answer is, that it was the same thing with this noted declamation as with the music of our operas. The most exact and most skilful composer of declamation left room for good actors to display their talents, and to shew, not only in their gesture, but likewise in the pronounciation, their superiority over indifferent artists. 'Tis impossible to note all the accents, rests, softenings, inflexions, shakes and breakings of the voice; and in short, if I may thus express myself, the spirit of declamation, whereof the variety of tones is only the body. Even in music itself we cannot write in notes all that is necessary for giving the modulation its true expression, and the strength and imbellishments of which it is susceptible. We cannot note down exactly the swiftness of the movement, tho' this movement is the very soul of music. The directions



directions which musicians, and especially the Italians, write in common letters on one side of the composition, to shew whether the movement is to be quick, or slow, shew it but very imperfectly. The only method hitherto found, pursuant to what we have already observed, of preserving the true movement of composition, is that of tradition; for the instrument invented by way of clock-work, to retain the just movement which composers gave to their airs and songs, in order to preserve it more exactly, have not as yet met with any great success.

An indifferent actor therefore does not sing the part of Atys or Rowland, so well as it is sung by a good actor, tho' they both intone the same notes, and follow Lulli's measure. The good actor who enters into the spirit of what he sings, accelerates or slackens seasonably some notes, borrowing from one to lend to the other; he throws out or retains his voice; he dwells upon some places; in fine he does several things which improve the expression and graces of his modulation, that an indifferent actor either omits, or does wrong. Each actor supplies out of his fund, and in proportion to his capacity, the want of what could not be written in notes.

Those who have been present at the operas of Lulli (which are now become the pleasure of mankind) when this famous musician was still living, and instructed the actors *viva voce* in those things which could not be committed to notes, affirm they found an expression in them at that time,  
which

which is hardly any longer perceptible. We find, say they, indeed the modulations of Lulli, but we seldom meet with that spirit which animated these modulations. The recitatives seem to have no life, and the balet airs leave us quite tranquil. They alledge as a proof of what they advance, that the representation of Lulli's operas lasts longer at present, than when they were executed under his direction; tho' they ought not to last near so long, because 'tis unusual now to repeat a great many airs, which Lulli generally played twice. The reason of this is, as these very same persons affirm, (for I warrant nothing myself.) because Lulli's *rhythmus* is no longer observed, but is altered by the actors either thro' ignorance, or presumption.

'Tis therefore certain that the notes of operas do not teach the intire execution, but leave a great many things unnoted, which the actor performs well or ill, according to his capacity. By a much stronger reason we may conclude that the composers of declamation did not debar good actors from displaying their talents.

In fine, the subjection of following the noted declamation, did not render the ancient actors languid and consequently incapable of moving the spectator. In the first place, as the actors themselves who recite in operas, are moved during their recitation; and as the constraint they are under of conforming to note and measure, does not hinder them from being animated, and consequently from declaiming with an easy and natural action; in like manner the constraint which the ancients were under of following a noted declamation, did not debar the actors from putting

themselves in the place of the personage they represented. In the second place (and this answer alone is sufficient to refute the objection) we are convinced that the ancient actors were as much moved, tho' under the constraint of conforming to a noted declamation, as ours are in declaiming after their own fancy. Quintilian says, \* that he has seen players come off the stage with tears in their eyes, when they had been acting a very engaging part. They were touched themselves, and consequently drew tears from the spectators. Besides, what great difference did not the ancients make between their actors? This objection against the custom of composing and noting the declamation, might have appeared of some weight, before the invention of operas; but the success of this spectacle, in which the actor, as we have already observed, is obliged to follow the note and measure, renders the objection frivolous. Experience dissipates in a moment a great many seeming difficulties, which reason alone would never perhaps be able to remove. 'Tis even dangerous to attempt to reason before a person has had some experience. We must make several reflections before we can judge properly whether an argumentation that runs upon possibilities, be solid or not; whereas experience sets us right in an instant. In fine, how comes it that the ancients who understood the merit of arbitrary declamation as well as we, determined, notwithstanding their experience, in favor of the noted declamation?

\* *Vidi ego sæpe histriones atque comædos, cum ex aliquo graviore actu personam deposuissent, flentes adhuc, egredi.* QUINT. Inst. lib. 9. cap. 3.



But it will be objected that most of the artists themselves condemn the practice of composing and noting the declamation, as soon as it is explained to them. I shall answer in the first place, that several persons worthy of credit have assured me, that Moliere, directed by the strength of his genius, and probably without being informed of what has been here explained concerning the ancient music, practised something very like the custom of the ancients; and that he had contrived notes to mark the tones he was to observe in declaiming those parts which he recited always in a uniform manner. I have likewise been informed that Beaubourg and some of our other actors used the same method. Secondly, we ought not to be surprized at this judgment of the artists. The spirit of man has a natural aversion to constraint; which is the necessary consequence of all those methods that pretend to oblige us to conform to certain rules. *Man will not be constrained*, says Montagne, *even in the manner of pursuing his pleasures*. Let us propose a military discipline to unpractised Barbarians; they will answer us directly, that these laws must take away from their courage that impetuosity which renders it triumphant. And yet we are convinced that the military discipline supports men's valor by those very laws to which it subjects them. Tho' some persons who constantly declaim, without being acquainted with any other rules but rote and instinct, reject at the first thought the custom of the ancients; it does not follow that this custom is therefore to be condemned. It does not even follow that they would continue to disapprove of it,



were they to give themselves a little trouble to reflect on its advantages and inconveniences. Perhaps they would regret there was no such art to be learnt in their youth, the time in which we are taught to execute with ease, pursuant to a certain method.

The attention of conforming to such rules as we have learnt from our infancy ceases very soon to be a constraint. The precepts we studied in that stage of life, seem even to be changed into a portion of our natural light. Quintilian answering those who pretended that an orator by following his vivacity and enthusiasm in declaiming, must be more moving than one that regulated his action and premeditated gestures, by the precepts of art, says, <sup>a</sup> that this way of thinking tends to subvert all kind of study ; and that culture improves the brightest capacities.

<sup>a</sup> *Sunt tamen qui rudem illam & qualem impetus cujusque animi tulit actionem, judicent fortiozem, sed non alii ferè quam qui etiam in dicendo curam solent improbare, & quidquid studio paratur. Nostro labori dent veniam, qui nihil credimus esse perfectum, nisi ubi natura cura juvetur.* QUINT. Inst. lib. II. cap. 3.



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*The first Number points out the Volume, and  
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## F I N I S.



## E R R A T A.

V O L. I. page 39, line 24, for *measures* read *modes*. p. 46, l. 28, for *none* r. *any*. p. 60, l. 11, for *of* r. *in*. p. 75, l. 29, for *emplyos*, r. *employs*. p. 87, l. 26, *to* omitted before *such*. p. 121, l. 30, for *affectation* r. *affection*. p. 133, l. 10, for *whilst* r. *but*. p. 147, l. 24, for *ridensque* r. *ridentque*. p. 148, l. 5, for *neither* r. *either* ; and in the next line for *nor* r. *or*. p. 161, l. 3, dele the second *The*. p. 209, l. 10, for *began first* r. *first began*. p. 213, l. 15, for *or* r. *nor*. p. 223, l. 16, the comma at *personages* ought to be at *scene*. p. 258, l. 32, for *are* r. *is*. p. 296, l. 15, for *Janiculcum* r. *Janiculum*. *ibid.* l. 25, for *Villa* r. *the Villa*. p. 342, l. 12, dele *not*. p. 389, last line, for *nor* r. *no*. *ibid.* for *alarm* r. *alarms*.

V O L. II. p. 139, l. 2, dele *same*. p. 147, l. 4 & 5, for *does not depend so much* r. *depends more*. *ibid.* l. 5, for *as* r. *than*. p. 157, l. 23, for *those* r. *the*. p. 335, first line, for *nor* r. *or*.

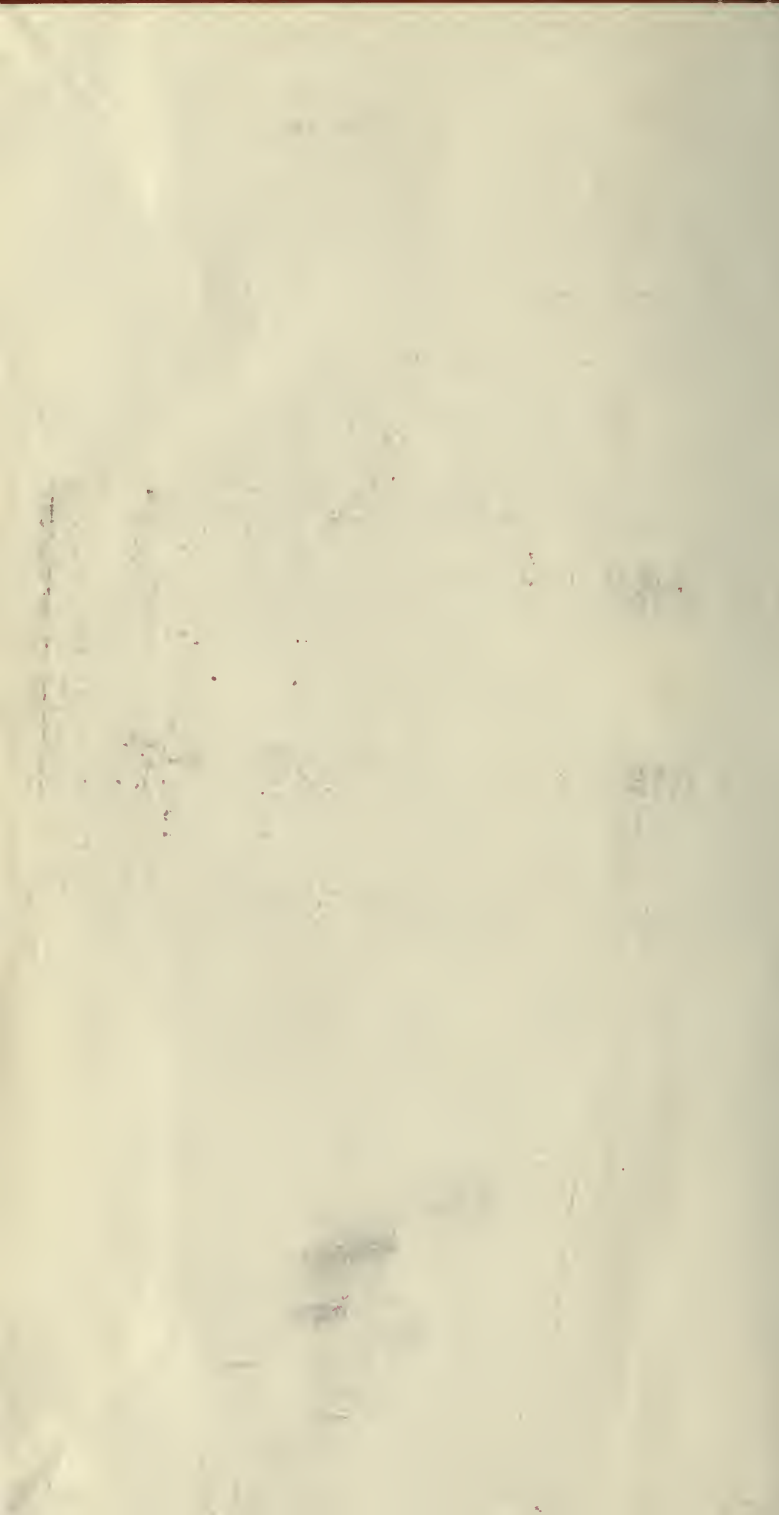
V O L. III. p. 28, l. 12, for *uses* r. *use*. p. 77, l. 19, for *number*, r. *numbers*. p. 91, l. 11, for *singing* r. *modulation*. p. 127, l. 16, the word *call* omitted before *du gros*. p. 142, l. 13, for *are* r. *is*.











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